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SUMMER'S END

64 The culinary treasures of England's Somerset region are many: cider, raspberries, and more, and as harvesttime approaches, they inspire simple, satisfying meals. BY TAMASIN DAY-LEWIS

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; LANDON NORDEMAN (2)

COVER

A juicy variety of watermelon called celebration.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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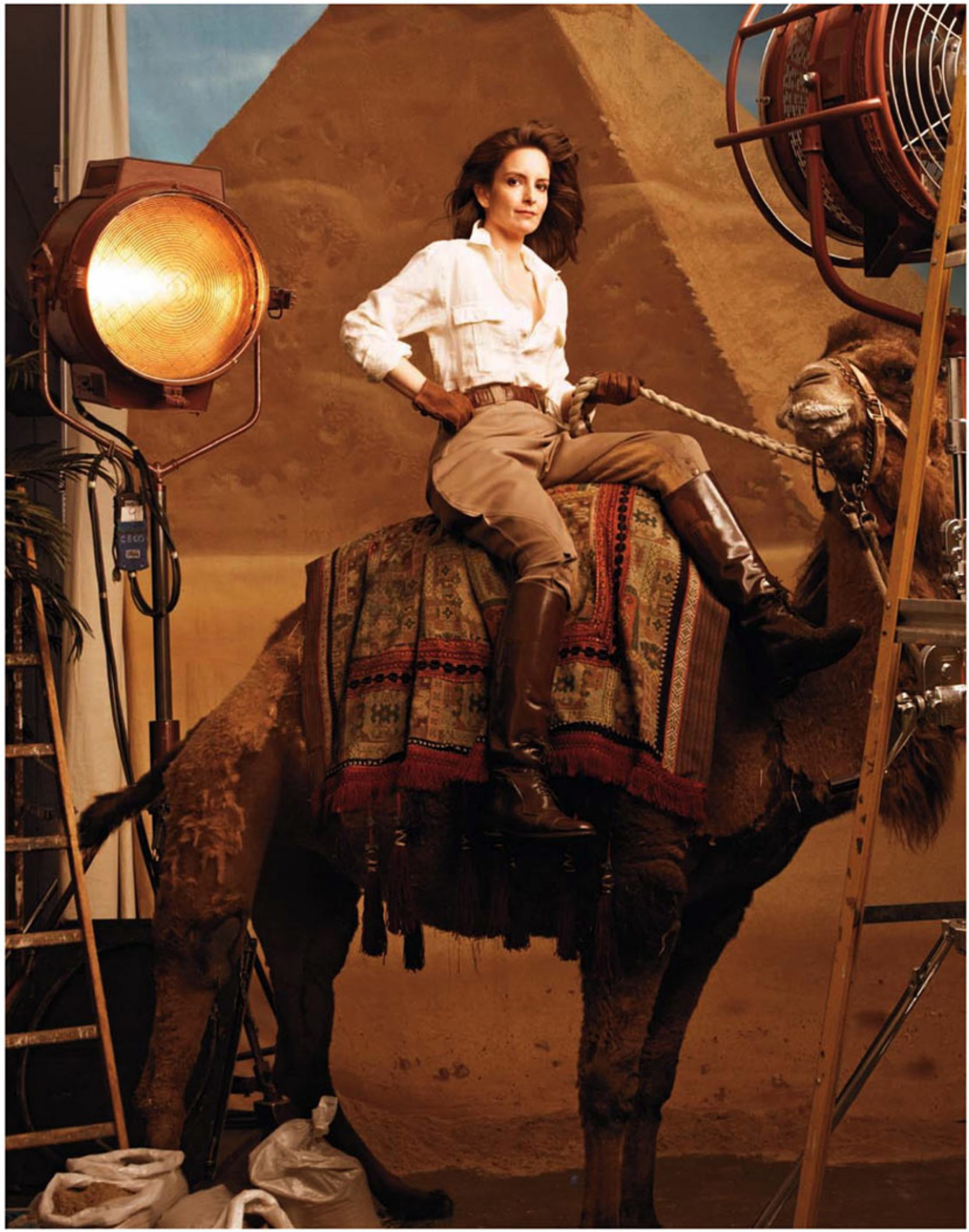

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Recent trip New York to Ohio for a family reunion

Favorite moment sitting out in the yard at night, listening to stories

Most interesting souvenir an Amish baby doll with no face

Favorite travel outfit Red leather suits. Always.

In-flight movie I once cried a little bit at a romantic movie with Hugh Grant and Sandra Bullock. Some might say it was the altitude, but I beg to differ

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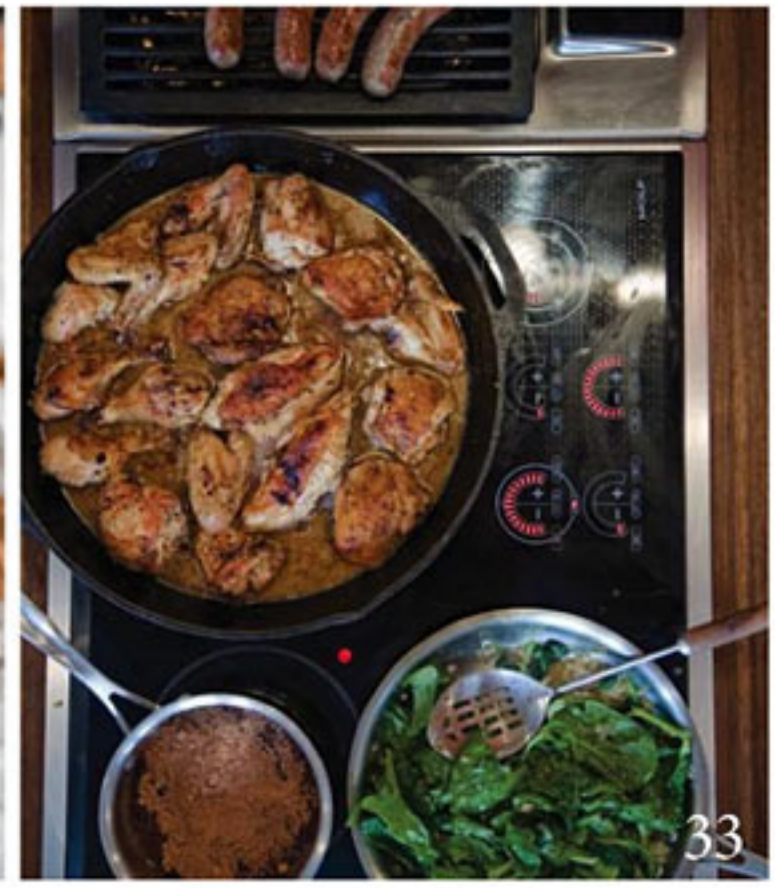

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FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2); LANDON NORDEMAN

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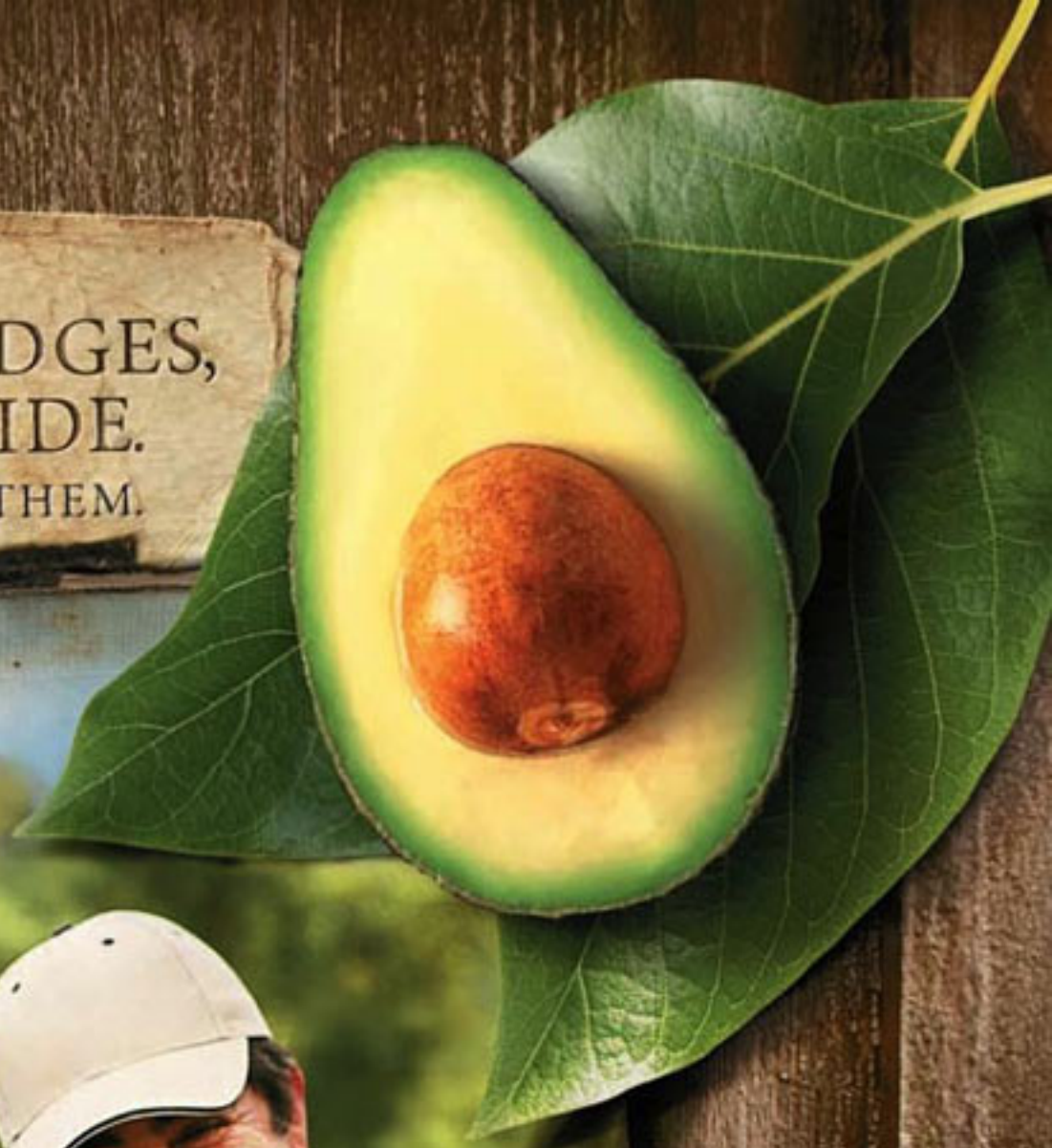

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ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (4)

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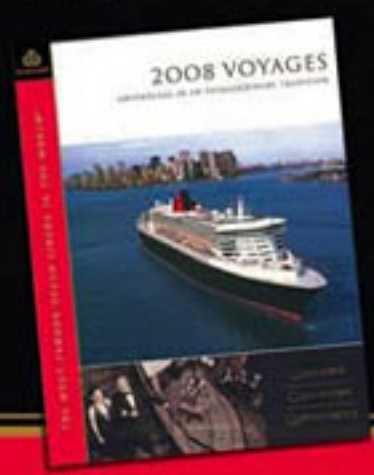

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FIRST

Road Warrior

SAVEUR finds a wild (and kindred) spirit in the English countryside

TAMASIN DAY-LEWIS doesn't make small talk. The first time I ate with her, at the Oyster Bar in New York City's Grand Central station, she held forth on the subject of food—cider, wild game, you name it—with a contagious enthusiasm that instantly made me want to get to know her. Seemingly oblivious to the din of the surroundings, she held me in thrall with descriptions of the meals she's cooked at her house in Somerset, in England's southwest: unpretentious yet sumptuous country feasts composed of foods grown or made near her home.

Until that first meeting, I'd known Day-Lewis only through her books—sprawling, gorgeous volumes featuring straightforward, delicious food—and what I'd read about her: well known in Britain for her television cooking programs, she is the daughter of the onetime poet laureate of England Cecil Day-Lewis and the sister of the actor Daniel Day-Lewis. What I found out after I accepted an invitation to spend a few days at her home is that she is indeed of a breed apart, but for reasons having little to do with her family pedigree.

I arrived at her house on a late-summer morning to find her amid piles of the fresh local produce—runner beans, fresh-picked berries, and more—that was going to become our lunch. Watching Tamasin cook was great fun: she chopped, pounded, and grated with relish and generally made a joyous mess. And the lunch itself? Just turn to page 64 and read "Summer's End" to get a taste of its simple beauty.

Later in the afternoon, as we polished off the last crumbs of dessert, Tamasin proposed that we drive to a nearby pub, the Royal Oak Inn in the village of Luxborough, for dinner. Soon we were in her car, hurtling down narrow, hedgerow-lined roads. At a particularly tight curve, Tamasin lurched to a halt and we got out. On the pavement lay a plump, tan-and-gray bird, apparently the victim of a vehicle that had come this way before us. "It's a partridge," she said excitedly. Then, putting her hand against its breast: "It's freshly killed. This will make a lovely roast!" With that, she popped the bird into the backseat and we proceeded on our way. This, I said to myself, is one serious food adventurer. But it occurred to me that Tamasin is more than that: in her full-hearted embrace of local food, in her reliance on traditional ways of cooking, and in her sheer passion for eating, she personifies the very principles that SAVEUR aims to convey in every issue.

Tamasin Day-Lewis with a partridge she found on a road in Somerset, England.

JAMES OSELAND

When we got back to her house that night, after one of the finest English pub meals I've ever eaten, an answering machine message was waiting for her: a friend had lined up a blind date for Tamasin later that week. "Perfect!" she said. "I'll bring him the roasted partridge." At this, I felt I had to offer a few words of advice: "Maybe save the road kill for the second date." —*JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief*

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another flight. but i don't mind. not with a dinner like this. grilled beef filet with chocolate cherry sauce. sounds delicious. more than delicious. like a meal fit for royalty. and paired with colonial estate explorateur shiraz. hmm. explorateur? yes, i'm an explorer treated like royalty in a foreign land. or should i say, far above a foreign land. not bad for a tuesday.

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FARE

News and Novelties from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

The Art of Miso

IN AN OLD WAREHOUSE located in Fuchu, a small town in Hiroshima prefecture, 400 miles southwest of Tokyo, Kunihiko Kanemitsu, a 63-year-old Fuchu native, shows me around the cool, dimly lit concrete room where he works. Dressed in a powder blue jacket over a pressed white shirt, he pauses briefly to inhale the yeasty aroma that hangs in the air. Eleven huge cedar barrels, eight feet tall and constructed more than a hundred years ago, flank the room. Within these barrels a felicitous transformation is taking place: soybeans, salt, and rice or barley are fermenting into miso, the savory paste that flavors everything in Japanese cuisine from soups and

Miso maker Kunihiko Kanemitsu's son, Kohichi, stands before vats of fermenting miso in his family's factory in Fuchu, Japan.

HARRIS SALAT

pickles to dressings for salads.

Kanemitsu is a fourth-generation producer here in Fuchu, where the making of miso is a centuries-old art. Miso is appreciated around the world, mainly for its healthful qualities: slow fermentation breaks down soybeans into a concentrated source of protein, and naturally occurring bacteria create a live culture similar to yogurt's. But in Japan a love for miso runs especially deep, and the food has long been a staple of the country's cooking. Of the hundreds of regional variations found within Japan, the mellow-tasting, artisanally made misos created in Fuchu are widely considered some of the best.

"Our miso is unique because Fuchu sits on the border between Japan's rice-growing regions and its barley-growing ones," Kanemitsu explains. To make miso, he adds koji mold (the same catalyst used in the fermentation of sake and soy sauce) to steamed rice or barley before combining them with cooked soybeans and salt and allowing the mixture to ferment slowly. Fuchu's geography and climate are particularly ideal for this process: set in a valley surrounded by mountains, the town has hot, humid summers and cold winters, a combination that promotes the growth of the bacteria necessary for the development of high-quality miso's complex flavors. This time-honored method stands in contrast to those of most commercial miso producers, who have found ways to mechanize the process and reduce fermentation time, at the expense of quality and taste.

Kanemitsu produces a dozen styles of miso by varying the proportions of his ingredients and the length of fermentation. (See "Three Popular Styles of Fuchu Miso", below.) His barley miso, called mugi miso, cures for up to three years, emerging as a coarse, mahogany-hued paste with an almost meaty taste. But the style for which he's the best known, and the one that put Fuchu on the miso-making map in Japan, is shiro, or white miso, a mild, sweet-tasting rice variety that local producers ferment for as little as one week. This miso was once favored primarily by the upper classes, but its popularity, along with that of Fuchu's other misos, spread with the help of merchants, regional lords, and travelers, who introduced it to other parts of the country beginning in the 17th century. By 1900, Fuchu was supporting ten miso companies.

Today, only three are still in operation. "The Japanese are switching to Western-style foods," Kanemitsu tells me. Indeed, since the 1970s, miso consumption in Japan has declined by more than 40 percent. This drop, coupled with the low cost of industrially made miso, has prompted Fuchu's remaining artisanal producers to promote their miso outside Japan. And that's a good thing: if all goes according to plan, some varieties of Fuchu miso will become available in America later this year. —*Harris Salat*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Manhattan is a narrow island off the coast of New Jersey devoted to the pursuit of lunch."

—*RAYMOND SOKOLOV*

METHOD

Tama Miso

(Egg Miso Sauce)

This sweet and silky miso sauce is thickened and enriched with an egg yolk for an even more velvety texture. (For a source for hard-to-find Japanese ingredients, see THE PANTRY, page 107.) Fill a 2-quart saucepan with water to a depth of 1"; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low. In a medium bowl, whisk together 1 cup shiro (white) miso, 1 tbsp. sake, 1 tbsp. mirin, 2 tsp. sugar, and 1 egg yolk. Place bowl over saucepan; cook, whisking, until mixture thickens, about 3 minutes. Remove bowl from heat and whisk in 3 tbsp. rice vinegar and 3 tbsp. water. (If a thinner sauce is desired, add a little more water.) Chill. Toss boiled chilled spinach, seaweed, diced raw tuna, or julienned daikon (pictured above, clockwise from top left) with enough sauce to coat. Makes about 1 cup.

Three Popular Styles of Fuchu Miso

Fuchu misos are generally mellower in taste and less salty than those produced elsewhere in Japan. Fuchu white miso **A**, which is also called shiro miso, is made of quickly fermented rice and soybeans; its sweet flavor and creamy texture work perfectly in such preparations as tama miso, an egg-enriched and vinegar-spiked miso sauce (see recipe, above), and ozoni, a traditional soup consumed during the first week of the new year. In Fuchu, caramel-colored chu miso **B**, also made with rice, strikes a nice balance between salty and sweet; typically aged for up to eight months, it's ideal in miso soup and oyster hot pot. Barley varieties such as aka mugi miso **C**, a red miso, are often found in the barley-growing regions of southern Japan. Mugi miso is usually aged for one to three years, which gives it a distinctive chestnut color and a salty, concentrated flavor that pairs well with meat. —*H.S.*

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2); ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

FARE

Two Feet Under

Patten, a speck of a town about two hours north of Bangor, Maine, is *the* place to be on the second Saturday in August. That's when the Patten Lumbermen's Museum hosts its annual bean hole supper, a traditional feast with centuries-old roots. On Friday afternoon, 68-year-old Donald Shorey, a retired forester and "the resident expert on these things", and his crew (which includes his sons and grandsons) dig 16 two-foot-deep pits on the museum grounds. They build a fire in each hole and then lower a sealed, bean-filled cast-iron or stainless-steel pot into it, cover the pot with dirt, and leave the beans to cook with a tangy amalgam of salt pork, sweet molasses, onions, spicy dry mustard, and salt and pepper until the following day. It's believed that settlers learned the technique from local Wabanaki Indians in the 17th century. Later, bean hole meals became a staple at the lumber camps in northern Maine; several pits were dug regularly to ensure a steady supply of the calorie-rich dish. Little has changed in the 40 years the museum has been hosting the supper. While the beans cook, volunteers prepare biscuits made with Bakewell Cream, a locally produced leavening agent, and grilled Jordan's hot dogs, bright red links that are a Maine favorite. After the meal, Shorey hangs up his apron. Though he cooks 150 pounds of beans for the supper, he admits, "This is the only meal I cook all year." —*Jessica Battilana*

AGENDA

AUGUST
8–9
ISTRA: TERRA MAGICA
Umag, Croatia
This two-day celebration in one of Istria's most picturesque bayside cities features the region's famed white truffles and local specialties like pršut (the Croatian answer to prosciutto), maneštra od bobići (sweet corn soup), and white malvasia wine, as well as cooking classes, traditional live music, and dancing. Information: 385/98/313-036.

AUGUST
9
HOMOWO FESTIVAL
Greater Accra, Ghana
Each year, the Ga Mashie tribe celebrates its perseverance—and invites visitors to do the same—with a harvest festival called Homowo (pictured left), whose name means to hoot at hunger. Past famines are memorialized in song, dance, and processions; the ritual culminates in a feast of kpokpoi, steamed cornmeal and okra served with palm nut soup. Information: 202/686-4520.

AUGUST
21–24
GUEYDAN DUCK FESTIVAL
Gueydan, Louisiana
Each summer the self-proclaimed Duck Capital of America lives up to its name with four days of skeet shoots, hunting-dog trials, and competitive waterfowl calling. But the festival's true raison d'être becomes clear on its final day, when cooks bring their best wildfowl recipes (pot-roasted mallard, anyone?) to a spirited outdoor cook-off. Information: www.duckfestival.org.

SEPTEMBER
6
Birthday:
CATHARINE E. BEECHER
East Hampton, New York, 1800
A vocal advocate for women's education (and the sister of abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe), Catharine E. Beecher (pictured right) made a mark on American food writing with *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book* (1846), a concise manual that was among the first cookbooks to encourage servantless homemakers to cook on their own.

SEPTEMBER
12–21
ONAM
Kerala, India
At this time of the year, the cities of the South Indian state of Kerala accommodate thousands of revelers as they commemorate the mythical King Mahabali's return from exile. After ten days of boat races and public feasting, families gather at home to share such dishes as avial (a coconut and vegetable curry) and banana halva (a rich pudding). Information: 91/98/1015-6087.

SEPTEMBER
13–14
SAGRA DELLA PORCHETTA
Monte San Savino, Italy
Every September, pork-loving tourists and residents of Monte San Savino, in Tuscany, swarm the village's historic district in honor of the signature local dish, porchetta—whole suckling pig stuffed with wild fennel, garlic, and black pepper and slow-roasted in a wood-fired oven; samples are given away in the town's main piazza. Information: 39/0575/849-418.

SEPTEMBER
15
Anniversary:
KETCHUPGATE
1981, Washington, D.C.
Early in Ronald Reagan's presidency, the USDA splattered ketchup all over the news by introducing a money-saving scheme to classify the condiment as a vegetable on school lunch menus. Critics condemned the move as an irresponsible attempt to cut corners (and nutritive benefits), and the proposal was ultimately tabled.

SEPTEMBER
26–28
AMERICAN WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL
Los Angeles
Prominent chefs and enthusiastic eaters come together at this annual showcase of America's up-and-coming and established culinary talent. This year's stellar roster of chefs, including José Andrés, Eric Ripert, and Wolfgang Puck (pictured left), the festival's cofounder, will be cooking all weekend at food and wine tastings, dinners, and parties around Los Angeles. Information: www.awff.org.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: THOMAS COCKREM/ALAMY; COURTESY ALEX PLANK; JIM WEST/ALAMY; RICK GAYLE/CORBIS; ILLUSTRATION: BEPPE GIACOBBE

STATE PLATES: NEW JERSEY

Good and Plenty New Jersey may be small, but it sure doesn't act that way—especially when it comes to affairs of the appetite. Jerseyans are passionate about their specialties, whether it's blue crabs or fried clams from a shorefront seafood joint or the local style of ultrathin-crust pizza. "Garden State" is a more fitting moniker than most outsiders think; beyond the tangled highways and suburban sprawl of its northeastern corner, New Jersey boasts beaches, pine barrens, river and ocean fisheries, and 9,000-plus farms producing tomatoes, blueberries, corn, and more. Several thriving immigrant communities—from Little India in Edison to the Ironbound, Newark's long-established Portuguese district—make New Jersey one of America's most gastronomically diverse destinations. Add to that a growing coterie of innovative chefs and, lest we forget, some legendary diners (New Jersey claims more than any other state), and it's no wonder Jerseyans have a little bit of attitude. —*Andrea Clurfeld*

A customer devours a plate of sliders at Hackensack's White Manna diner.

NINE REGIONAL TASTES

Quintessential New Jersey food experiences not to be missed when you're visiting the state

1. The thin-crust tomato pizza at the original De Lorenzo's, in Trenton.

2. The fried local fluke at Mustache Bill's, a fishermen's diner in Barnegat Light.

3. The enormous subs on fresh-baked bread at the White House Sub Shop, a former Sinatra haunt in Atlantic City.

4. The smart, seasonal Latin fare of chef-owner Maricel Presilla (above) at restaurants Cucharamama and Zafra, in Hoboken.

5. The stretchy saltwater taffy from Fralinger's, a 123-year-old Atlantic City institution.

6. The bibimbap at the Korean restaurant Doo Rae Myun Ok, in Fort Lee's Little Korea.

7. The Delaware River shad at the annual Shad Fest in Lambertville.

8. Oldwick Shepherd, a creamy, cave-ripened raw sheep's milk cheese made at Valley Shepherd Creamery, in Long Valley.

9. The luscious pâté and duck confit from D'Artagnan, the Newark-based purveyor of French prepared foods, co-founded by Ariane Daguin in 1985.

Top Tomatoes In America tomatoes were thought to be poisonous until 1820, when one Colonel Robert Gibbon Johnson made news by marching up the steps of the Salem County, N.J., courthouse and devouring an entire basket of them. Nowadays, it's not the rutgers canning variety or even the ubiquitous beefsteak for which the state is the best known; it's the heirlooms raised by farmers like Dorothy Turner and Jim Cook, of the plainly named The Farm, and Ross and Debbie Clayton of Clayton Farm, both in Freehold Township.

Burgers from Heaven There are Jersey diners, and then there's White Manna, a pint-size streak of silver in Hackensack that serves the world's best sliders: mini sirloin burgers griddled with caramelized onions and served on squishy potato rolls with molten cheese. The building once belonged to a small burger chain that got its start at the 1939 world's fair; another outpost of the former franchise, called White Mana (*sic*), is still operating (under different ownership) in Jersey City.

Latest and Greatest Jersey's restaurant scene is as variegated as the state's tastes. At Bay Avenue. Trattoria, in Highlands, chef Joe Romanowski combs local farms, fields, and coastal waters to source ingredients for his micro-seasonal menus, as does Andrea Carbine, the chef at A Toute Heure, in Cranford. Upscale Indian eateries are also proliferating across the state; the swankiest of them all is restaurateur Dilip Mehta's Urban Tadka, in Iselin, which offers a thoroughly modern Indo-Chinese bill of fare.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: MICHAEL KRAUS; JAMES OSELAND; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; ANNA BAUER; LANDON NORDEMAN.

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FARE

Brooklyn Brew

EACH SUMMER, a parade of new-fangled chilled coffee drinks crowds supermarket shelves—from bottled Frappuccino to coffee-colas—each promising a more refreshing, more intense caffeine kick. Thanks to its retro label and distinctive glass bottle, a shopper could easily mistake Manhattan Special Espresso Coffee Soda for one of the new guard. But if you were raised in the New York City area and have a good memory, you'll know that this bittersweet soda is, in fact, the original bottled pick-me-up. I grew up watching my relatives sip the dark, slightly bubbly beverage at summer barbecues and Sunday suppers. Some of them would drink it straight from the bottles sold at delis; others would pour it over ice and add a touch of milk. Once I was old enough for such a grown-up drink, I'd add creamy vanilla ice cream to it to make a float when I got home from school.

I'd never known just how special Manhattan Special was, though, until I stumbled on the company's booth at the Fancy Food Show, a food-industry convention held in New York City. Manning the booth was Aurora Passaro, the great-granddaughter of Teresa Cimino, a native of Naples, Italy, who cofounded the company in 1895. Passaro explained that the soda, which has a cult following in Italian-American communities in and around New York, takes its name not from the island of Manhattan but from Manhattan Avenue, a street in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, where her family settled and where they've been making the drink, in the same factory, ever since.

MICHAEL KRAUS

Passaro, who runs Manhattan Special with her brother Louis, doesn't believe that the soda was inspired by any particular Italian cold coffee refreshment, such as granita. More likely, her great-grandmother's invention is an American answer to an Italian craving. "Italian immigrants drank a lot of espresso with sugar," Passaro told me. "During the summer they'd cool it down, but no one wanted to drink it with ice and dilute it." Those were the days when seltzer salesmen made home deliveries and drugstore soda fountains added flavored syrups to fizzy water. So, Teresa Cimino concocted a drink, the recipe for which remains essentially unchanged, tailored to her community: she brewed heavily roasted espresso coffee, sweetened it with cane sugar to make a syrup, and added carbonated water. This summer, the company began selling the beverage through its online store (www.manhattanspecial.com), and, though it has recently introduced a line of its own, Starbucks-esque bottled coffee drinks, Passaro knows where her customers' loyalties lie: "Once you've developed a taste for our soda," she said, "it's hard to go back." —*Dana Bowen*

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CELLAR

Civilized Company

Sherry's time has come, again

BY DAVID WONDRICH

BEFORE THE FIRST World War, it seemed that whenever a well-bred English speaker met a well-bred English speaker, a glass of sherry, the famous fortified white wine from Spain, followed. And, when the weather was warm, just about every adult in the United States, whether or not he or she knew how to use a dessert fork, liked a sherry cobbler—a tipple that's simply a largish glass of dry amontillado or oloroso sherry shaken up with a bit of sugar, a slice or two of orange, and plenty of ice. The sportier types might even have had their sherry mixed into an honest-to-god cocktail (a favorite of the 1890s was the bamboo, a dry and refreshing mix of sherry, dry vermouth, and bitters). However it was taken, southwestern Spain's contribution to human contentment was an essential part of sophisticated drinking. Small wonder: peerlessly dry when you wanted something dry, rich and sweet when you wanted that, this nutty-tasting wine—produced in several distinct styles in and around the Andalusian city of Jerez de la Frontera—was (and still is) the perfect thing to have before a meal, or after it, or really anytime at all, especially in the summer.

In a sense, sherry's popularity was also its undoing. By the early years of the 20th century, growing demand in Britain had led to a flood of cheap imitations that damaged the wine's reputation. Then came the trenches and the mud and the blood. I suppose that anything bound up too closely with an ostensibly civilized society that could send a generation of young men to slaughter was destined to suffer in the reckoning that ensued, and indeed, for many, sherry went the way of tonal music and virginity. You can witness it happening in a scene, set in the 1920s, from Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*, wherein the cosmopolitan Anthony Blanche orders gin cocktails for himself and Charles Ryder, the book's rather more conservative narrator, with the comment "I expect you would prefer sherry, but, my dear Charles, you are not going to *have* sherry."

The drink didn't fare much better on this side of the Atlantic, where, in the face of Prohibition, a younger, more cynical generation had developed a thirst for harder stuff. Take, for example, *Parties*, the bohemian intellectual Carl Van Vechten's feverish and booze-sodden novel, published in 1930; in that skewering of New York society, the only people who drink sherry are a monocled German undergraduate and somebody's mother.

Still, sherry didn't disappear altogether. In 1920, the English literary critic George Saintsbury gave sherry pride of place in his classic of wine writing *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, with the statement that "no reasonable person should quarrel if we begin with sherry". Of course, he was in his 70s at the time. This is pretty much how things would go for the rest of the 20th century: though Britain remained a key export market for sherry, among youthful drinkers on both sides of the Atlantic the drink came to be viewed the way Latin is: an arcane sort of thing that might be nice to know but is hardly indispensable.

The eccentricities inherent in the way sherry is classified could be partly to blame. As Saintsbury observed, the drink is "singularly various in kind", and sorting out all the finos and olorosos and palo cortados, all the amontillados and manzanillas and pedro ximénezes (see "Tasting Notes", page 32), was enough to send many consumers back to the reassuring familiarity of a burgundy or a manhattan. Then there is the fact that producers add a little grape brandy to the wine to stop fermentation. No matter that some California cabernets ship out at a higher proof than many sherries; for a lot of

DAVID WONDRICH *is the author of, most recently,* Imbibe! *(Perigee, 2007), a history of bartending in America, for which he received a 2008 James Beard award.*

METHODS

Sherry Cobbler

Fruit-and-wine cobblers were popular in the United States in the mid-1800s. Author Wondrich considers this one to be "as simple and tasty a drink as has ever been concocted by the hands of mankind". In it, a touch of citrus offsets the sherry's nutty character. In a cocktail shaker, combine 4 oz. dry amontillado or oloroso sherry, 1/4 oz. (or 1/2 tbsp.) simple syrup (made by first boiling together equal parts sugar and water and then letting the mixture cool), and a halved orange slice. Shake vigorously for 10–15 seconds and strain into a highball glass filled with cracked ice. Garnish with another halved orange slice and serve. Makes 1.

Bamboo Cocktail

This elegant drink was created in the 1890s by Louis Eppinger, the manager of the Grand Hotel in Yokohama, Japan, to slake the thirst of visiting dignitaries. Two kinds of bitters, orange and Angostura, add an aromatic dimension to the sherry. In a mixing glass, combine 1 1/2 oz. dry amontillado sherry, 1 1/2 oz. Noilly Prat dry vermouth, 2 dashes orange bitters (a concoction of sour orange peel, spices, and alcohol; see page 107 for a source), 1 dash Angostura bitters, and cracked ice. Stir ingredients for 20–30 seconds until well chilled and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Add a twist of lemon and serve. Makes 1.

Top row, from left, Williams & Humbert Dry Sack 15 Year Sweet Old Oloroso; a sherry cobbler. Middle row, from left, Lustau Solera Reserva Palo Cortado Peninsula; Sandeman Character Medium Dry Amontillado; González Byass Tio Pepe Fino; a bamboo cocktail. Bottom row, from left, Hidalgo La Gitana Manzanilla; González Byass Noé Muy Viejo VORS; Lustau Solera Reserva Dry Oloroso "Don Nuño".

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wine drinkers, *fortified* was a dirty word.

What's more, in Spain's sherry *bodegas*, or cellars, the vintners store the wine in a collection of barrels, called a *solera*, taking off only part of the oldest barrels' sherry for bottling and refilling those barrels from the next-oldest ones, and so on. Where is the fun, wine lovers asked themselves, if there aren't any vintages to fetishize? Throw in levels of sweetness that can vary from none whatsoever to dessert-in-a-glass, and many consumers ended up with the sense that sherry wasn't a true wine.

Funny what a little shift in perspective will do, though. These days, classic cocktails are back. Bitters, rye whiskey, vermouths—anything that has pre-Prohibition roots—are getting a second look, and so is sherry. The popularity of Spanish tapas, traditionally consumed with sherry, has helped to raise the drink's profile, too, but those are only superficial reasons why sherry deserves a comeback. Sure, the wine has impeccable old-school credentials, and, yes, a lot of the traits that kept sherry on the sidelines—the mellow, oxidized flavors; the sweetness and the added alcohol—no longer seem so outdated or esoteric. But ultimately, the allure of this drink is as simple and timeless as that of all the finest wines and spirits: it's artisanally made, unique in its flavors and colors, and, most important, deeply pleasurable to drink.

W *Another classic sherry cocktail recipe at* SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE113

True, the nomenclature can still be tricky, but then, so is telling your grand cru from your cru bourgeois. And, after all, that's what study is for, preferably with a nice glass of amontillado at one's elbow. It might be too much to hope for a second coming of the sherry cobbler as America's summer drink of choice, but a boy can dream, can't he?

TASTING NOTES

All sherry begins its life as white wine (usually, but not always, made from the palomino fino grape) that is fortified with grape spirit and aged in oak after fermentation. The process gets a bit more complicated after that. The easiest way to make sense of things is to divide sherries into three categories: the pale, dry ones aged entirely or partially under a white crust of yeast, called *flor*, which prevents oxidation (these include finos and manzanillas, as well as amontillados); the darker, richer ones aged completely or mostly without *flor* (such as deep amber olorosos and the rarer palo cortados); and the intensely sweet dessert sherries classified as PX, for pedro ximénez, the type of grape used to make it (these sherries are generally used for blending, but every once in a while an exceptional old PX is bottled). Here are seven bottles that I found to be excellent expressions of each of sherry's principal styles (see THE PANTRY, page 107, for sources.) —*D.W.*

GONZÁLEZ BYASS NOÉ MUY VIEJO VORS ($45/375 ml). Grape stems, raisins, molasses, caramel, road tar, fig newton: this 30-year-old PX envelops the nose with all things dark and rich and sweet.

GONZÁLEZ BYASS TIO PEPE FINO ($18). The benchmark fino. The very essence of dryness, with an intriguing, umami note of soy sauce and mushrooms.

HIDALGO LA GITANA MANZANILLA ($14/500 ml). Just as dry as the Tio Pepe, but with a touch less umami and the presence of the green apple notes characteristic of a manzanilla.

LUSTAU SOLERA RESERVA DRY OLOROSO "DON NUÑO" ($28). A classic old oloroso from the 112-year-old Lustau winery: juicier than the Península (below), with heady hints of truffle.

LUSTAU SOLERA RESERVA PALO CORTADO PENÍNSULA ($28). Palo cortados are said to straddle the median between crisp amontillado and dark, rich oloroso; that is precisely what this one does: nuts and brine mingle with a lively acidity, balanced by a little richness in the mouth.

SANDEMAN CHARACTER MEDIUM DRY AMONTILLADO ($15).Perfectly balanced: nutty and raisiny, with a hint of brininess and a good acidity. A great sherry for mixing.

WILLIAMS & HUMBERT DRY SACK 15 YEAR SWEET OLD OLOROSO ($25). Dry Sack is a proprietary blend and not dry at all. When old, like this one, Dry Sack sherries become intense, dark, fruity, and redolent of blackberries. A perfect dessert wine.

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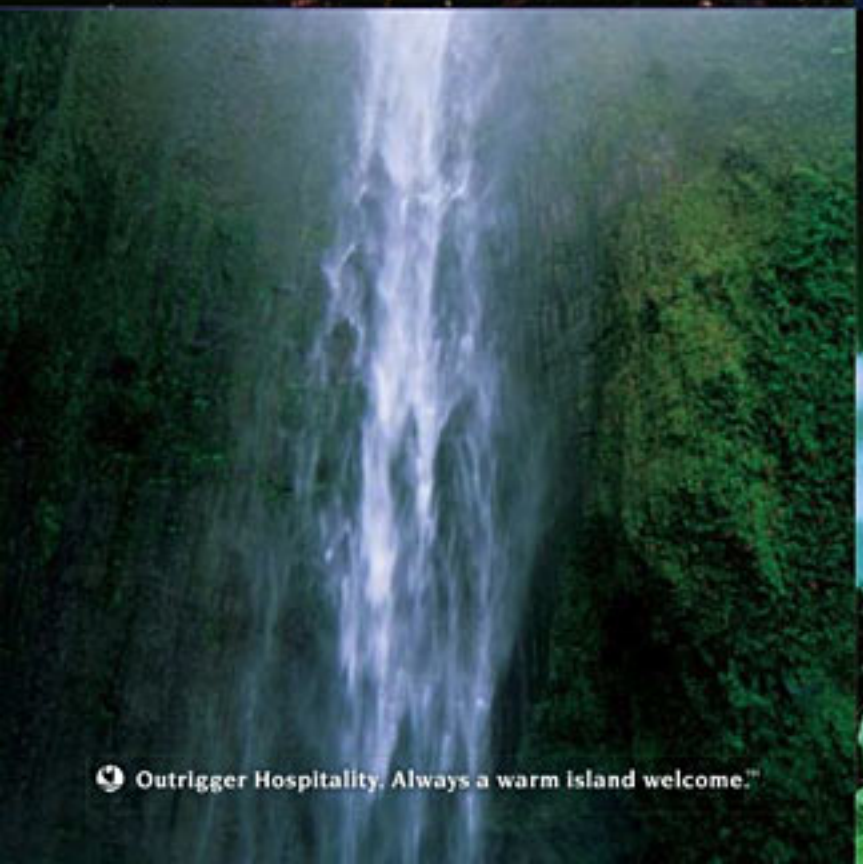

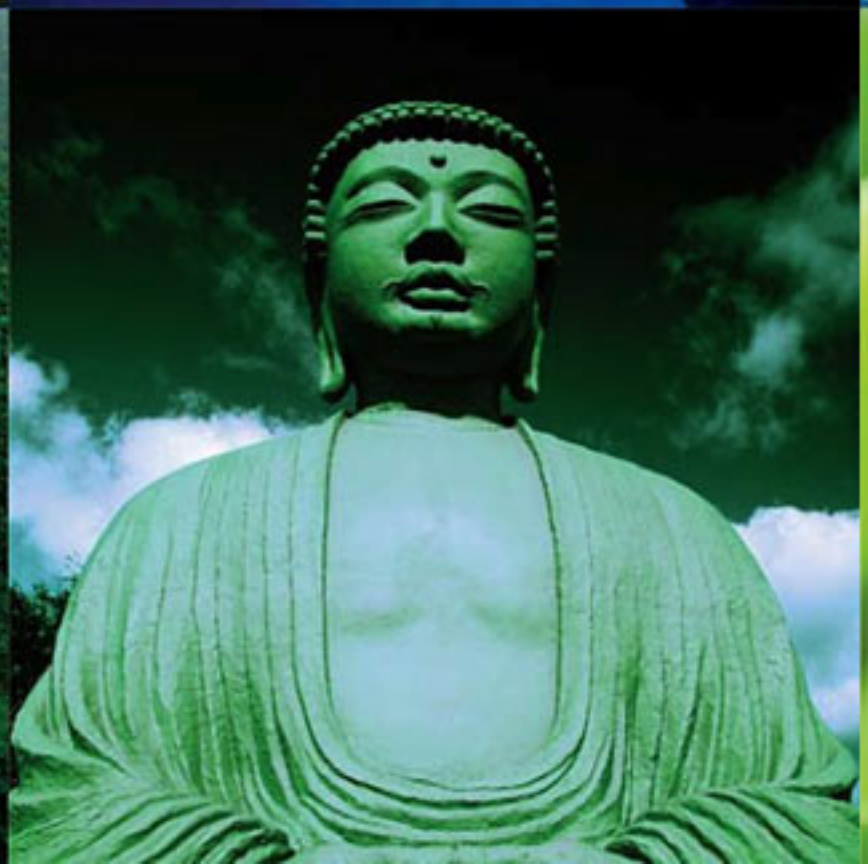

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LIVES

The Welcoming Table

Constance Chang helped bring regional Chinese cuisine to the world

BY PANG-MEI NATASHA CHANG

In the suburb of New Haven, Connecticut, where I grew up during the 1970s, there were two Chinese restaurants. At both of them, the standard fare was egg foo young, sweet-and-sour pork, barbecued spareribs, and other Cantonese-style standbys. If my family ate at one of these places, we talked to the waiter in Mandarin or Cantonese and ordered dishes not on the menu. If we were lucky, the cook was Shanghainese like my father or Sichuanese like my mother, and we'd get to savor Shanghai-style pickled snow cabbage with shredded pork or a red-braised whole fish, or perhaps Sichuanese double-cooked pork. Sometimes, non-Chinese families would look over at our table and say, "We want what they're having."

At home, my mother, Sung-Wen Chang, a teacher and a tireless hostess who regularly threw dinner parties for as many as 30 people, strived to educate our non-Chinese guests about the diversity of Chinese cooking. Over the years, she introduced friends and colleagues to hoisin-marinated chicken, lion's head meatballs with vermicelli, cauliflower with crabmeat, smashed cucumbers with ginger and sesame oil, and more. Unlike many traditional Chinese-American hostesses we knew, my mother wasn't content to stay behind in the kitchen cooking while the guests ate without her. So, on one side of our dining room, she had constructed a buffet table complete with retractable leaves and electric sockets for the warming trays. In addition to allowing my mother to join guests at the table, buffet-style dining ensured the satisfaction of any appetite, large or small, adventurous or timid. Guests could pile their plate with fried rice if they liked, but they could also try just a forkful of drunken chicken or stewed beef tendon.

Years later, while researching my family's history for a book, I discovered that buffet dining occupies a special place in the Changs' past: Constance D. Chang, a cousin of my father's, launched a legendary culinary career by applying the idea of the Western-style all-you-can-eat smorgasbord to Chinese

COURTESY PANG-MEI NATASHA CHANG

Constance D. Chang showing a group of hotel managers the buffet table at the Yokohama branch of Peacock Hall in 1962.

restaurant cooking. As I uncovered more details about Constance, I became enthralled by her life and times and by her passion—similar to the one that propelled my mother—for spreading the gospel of authentic Chinese cuisine, one buffet dinner at a time.

Born in Shanghai in 1917, Constance studied in Japan after World War II and settled there with her husband, a physician. A consummate cook, she and two friends opened a Chinese restaurant, called Mi Mi Sai (Delicious House), in Tokyo in 1954. Located near the U.S. embassy and the Japanese foreign ministry, the establishment became popular with diplomats both American and Japanese. Constance noticed that her customers always ordered the same dishes: sweet-and-sour pork, egg foo young, and boiled chicken—perfectly good (and, by that time, familiar) Cantonese-inspired fare but hardly the tastiest things on the menu.

Then, in 1956, Constance negotiated a deal with the owner of the Tokyu Hotel, in Tokyo's Ginza district, for opening a Chinese restaurant there. She knew that, just a few years earlier, Tokyo's famous Imperial Hotel had opened one of the first smorgasbord-style restaurants in Japan; it was called the Viking, and, with its Scandinavian fare and one-price menu, it had become immensely popular. Inspired by that restaurant's success, Constance proposed an unusual idea to the hotel's owner: a Chinese smorgasbord.

In 1959, Peacock Hall, probably the first buffet-style Chinese restaurant in Japan, opened its elegant, carved-wood doors. Named after a hotel-restaurant in Constance's beloved Shanghai, it offered an unlimited number of servings of dishes both hot and cold. Up to 40 foods were on display at any given meal: from tea-smoked duck and steamed carp belly with ginger and scallions to beef in black bean sauce and shark's fin soup. Constance labeled the dishes—in Japanese, English, and Chinese—with their place of origin: Shanghai, Sichuan, Hong Kong, Beijing, and so on. For a single price, diners got to taste a sprawling array of stir-fried, deep-fried, braised, glazed, stewed, and boiled delicacies—the whole, dizzying mosaic that is Chinese cuisine.

Peacock Hall banked heavily on the all-you-can-eat concept. Constance installed two big curved mirrors: one, placed by the entrance, made patrons look slender; the other, located by the exit, made them look heavy. The one-price-fits-all policy was put to the test a few months after the restaurant opened, when one of Tokyo's best-known celebrities, a 300-pound sumo wrestler named Taiho, and 13 of his similarly proportioned cohorts paid a visit. The men returned from the buffet table six times with plates piled high; in the kitchen, Constance's three chefs worked double-time to keep the food coming. Yet, at the end of the evening, Constance honored the sumo wrestlers by charging them not a yen more than the standard all-you-can-eat price. Word got out, and from that night on Peacock Hall could not keep customers away.

METHOD

Smashed Cucumbers with Ginger

This easily made pickle is a great side dish for both Asian and Western courses. Cut 4 kirby cucumbers into irregular chunks about 2" long and 1/4" thick. Transfer cucumber slices to a medium bowl, sprinkle with 2 tsp. kosher salt, mix, and set aside at room temperature to extract excess liquid and let them soften, about 1 hour. Meanwhile, julienne a 1" piece fresh peeled ginger; transfer to a medium bowl and set aside. Drain and gently squeeze cucumbers to extract more liquid, then pat dry with a towel. Add cucumbers to the bowl of ginger along with 1 tbsp. sugar, 1 1/2 tbsp. rice wine vinegar, 1 tsp. sesame oil, and 2 roughly chopped cloves garlic. Toss to combine and season with kosher salt, to taste. Let rest at room temperature for at least 15 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to come together. Serves 4.

For many Japanese and Chinese eaters, the Western-style buffet brought a breath of fresh air. Both Japanese and Chinese traditional meals entail a highly ritualized presentation and obey strict codes of etiquette. At a formal Chinese banquet, for example, you may not help yourself to a piece of food from the communal plate without serving at least two people on either side of you, and then only in a prescribed manner: the young serve the old; the less important serve the more important. Imagine monitoring every mouthful during a two-hour, ten-course meal, and you'll have an idea of how exhilarating a take-as-you-please buffet was to the Asian patrons of Peacock Hall.

Eventually, Aunt Constance opened five more Peacock Hall restaurants in Tokyo and four other Japanese cities. The culmination of Peacock Hall's success came in 1962, when, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, Emperor Hirohito himself requested that Constance and her staff prepare a buffet-style dinner for 100 guests. That the emperor, considered a veritable demigod by much of the Japanese populace, would deign to serve himself dinner was nothing short of revolutionary.

In the years that followed, Constance came to be regarded in Japan as something of a Julia Child of Chinese cuisine; she wrote nearly a dozen cookbooks, opened a culinary school, and hosted a popular television cooking program. In 1994 she emigrated to the United States to be near her children.

I met Constance for the first time about three years ago in San Francisco, at the wedding of a cousin. Open, genial, even girlish, Constance, now in her 90s, graciously signed autographs for a few guests there who knew of her from Japan. When I was finally able to have a moment alone with her, I asked her whether her proposal for a buffet-style restaurant had been purely business related. She laughed and told me that, more than for any other reason, she had opened Peacock Hall because she became bored with taking the same orders all the time. In a way, though, her opening a buffet-style restaurant was also an act of diplomacy, she said. She'd seen China and Japan at war with each other for much of her early life, and the dinner table seemed as good a place as any for a rapprochement.

Now that she was in America, Constance told me, she was delighted to see that Chinese restaurant buffets—which were now a common sight in the States, albeit in less ambitious incarnations than Peacock Hall—were thriving. Yes, egg foo young and sweet-and-sour pork were still on the menu at many places, but the door to experimentation had been thrown open.

Pang-Mei Natasha Chang *is the author of* Bound Feet & Western Dress: A Memoir *(Anchor Books, 1996).*

JAMES OSELAND

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KITCHENWISE

Creativity by Design

Inside SAVEUR's new test kitchen

BY TODD COLEMAN

THE WRITERS AND photographers of this magazine travel to every part of the world to trace the origins of regional foods and culinary traditions, but at its heart, SAVEUR is a publication about what happens at home, in the kitchen—about the deeply gratifying, universal act of cooking. That's why one of our principal missions has always been to develop and test (and retest, and retest) our recipes with the home cook in mind. So, when our editorial staff recently moved its offices to a space on New York City's East 32nd Street, the opportunity to create a new test kitchen from the ground up was tantalizing. The facility, a 926-square-foot work area and dining room that shares an open-plan floor with the editors' offices and workstations, has become the physical and creative hub of the magazine. Just like a home kitchen, ours is a busy, welcoming place where the staff tastes various dishes, compares cooking techniques, and exchanges ideas. "The kitchen is the engine of what we do at the magazine," says SAVEUR's test kitchen director, Hunter Lewis.

That said, we place demands on our space and on our equipment that exceed those of even the busiest home kitchen. For any given issue, Hunter and his staff must test as many as 40 recipes to make sure that the instructions are foolproof and that the dishes come out just right. On a recent workday during the making of the present issue, Hunter shuttled between the kitchen's *(continued on page 42)*

SAVEUR test kitchen director Hunter Lewis at the stove, sautéing pea shoots and spinach.

JAMES O'SELAND

1 A broad, steel-topped display counter (equipped with two Sub-Zero wine refrigerators) and two islands accommodate many cooks at once; our stainless-steel appliances, including three ovens, a warming drawer, and two refrigerators, are clustered on the kitchen's rear wall, far enough away from the islands to ensure an efficient flow of movement around the room. **2** The plates and other props we use in photo shoots are the haul from regular visits by food editor Todd Coleman to New York City-area antiques shops and thrift stores. **3** Project director Sergio Mercado (left) and studio director John Henderson, two key members of Clodagh's design team, worked closely with us to arrive at a design that would suit our needs. **4** The kitchen's central islands are fitted with wheels, making them easy to move around for the cooking demonstrations and other functions for which our kitchen is occasionally used. **5** This deeply savory macaroni and cheese, made from a recipe that appeared in our April 2005 issue, is a favorite for staff meals. **6** Steel-fronted drawers keep our most frequently used tools within ready reach. **7** All ten burners and the cast-iron grill on our Wolf cooktops are in constant use on the busiest days, when we test as many as a dozen different recipes.

THIS PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; FACING PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMES OSELAND; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; JAMES OSELAND; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (3)

(continued from page 39) central cooktop island, where he was monitoring a double boiler full of chocolate and butter destined for a batch of brownies, and his desk, situated in an alcove within the main kitchen area, where he was researching sources for the rennet needed for making ricotta. Nearby, assistant kitchen director Ben Mims was toiling over several simmering pots, trying to determine what kind of beer worked the best for cooking bratwurst, while, a few feet away, kitchen assistant Krystal Stone was whisking sake with white miso to make a miso sauce.

During our first magazine close—that hectic period when we're preparing to ship the issue to the printer—we discovered that our new kitchen could also feel like home. Editors would wander over to the fridge, page proofs in hand, looking for a snack. Late at night, the work islands would become conversation hubs, with some folks hopping up to sit on the counter while they talked and ate. While this dynamic arrangement feels completely organic, it hardly happened by accident. Clodagh, the New York–based designer who created our kitchen and dining room, is famous for integrating open kitchens into larger living spaces and for her affinity for natural materials and serene, low-maintenance environments. "I love kitchens and the overlay of art and function," she says. "I wanted it to feel comfortable, a place where you can cook efficiently but still be creative." Clodagh's design is the product of an intensive process in which she and her team helped SAVEUR's staff to articulate its wants and needs.

What strikes many first-time visitors to the kitchen that Clodagh came up with is the look and feel of the sensuous, textured surfaces. "We chose stainless steel for durability and ease of maintenance," the designer explains, "and walnut doors to keep things from coming off as too cold." She called on artisans with whom she's worked for years to create the space's built-in features. In the dining area, Rick Cuneo installed deep cabinets made of honey-colored maple, and Gregory de Laura and Tracey Stakelin of Delform Partners turned out a recessed sideboard and a long, low window bench in polished concrete. It was fascinating to watch them pour ordinary concrete and then, over the course of several days, sculpt and buff it until it had a veneer as smooth to the touch and as richly patterned as marble.

W A recipe for macaroni and cheese and other favorite staff meals at SAVEUR .COM/ISSUE113

A CARDINAL RULE IN THE SAVEUR test kitchen has always been that we use only those kinds of utensils and equipment one would find in a typical home kitchen. Because of the volume of food we have to prepare and cook, we opted for the highest-quality, most durable home kitchen appliances to be had. Two large side-by-side refrigerator-freezers and two refrigerator drawers, both by Sub-Zero, along with a Thermador column freezer, offer ample space for the ingredients we use in our dishes, as well as for the items that cooks, farmers, and purveyors from around the world send us for sampling. And, much to the satisfaction of Ben, who handles a lot of the baking, our three Wolf ovens display the exact temperature at all times and maintain extraordinarily even heat distribution. A microwave and a warming drawer, also from Wolf, help us to keep all the elements of a menu at the proper temperature until everything is ready to serve.

My favorite part of the kitchen, hands down, is the pair of eight-foot-eight-inch- by three-foot islands that command the center of the room. One, topped with deeply grained, cocoa brown walnut, is our main prep table and chopping block. The other comprises two five-burner Wolf electric cooktops and a sturdy cast-iron grill. Each of the units' bases consists of a grid of cubbyholes where we keep our most frequently used pots and pans. These islands were originally conceived as conjoined units, but in the sort of happy evolution that a genuinely accommodating design makes possible, they may be kept separate so that traffic flows more freely around and between them. In addition to the islands, we have a movable cart, made by Thermador, that holds an electric cooktop and oven; it's essential for in-house photo shoots, which often require moving the food we're cooking to wherever the quality of light in the office happens to be the best. Last but not least, two Kohler sinks and two Thermador dishwashers, in operation almost ceaselessly, help us keep the kitchen tidy—a crucial requirement in such a busy place.

THE PANTRY, *page 107: More information on the* SAVEUR *test kitchen.*

ANATOMY OF A RECIPE

Cooking is an intuitive and spontaneous process. Recipe testing? Not so much. There's a practiced methodology we follow, and our new kitchen was designed to support it. Here's how it works: an author sends us a recipe, and the kitchen staff sets out to find the ingredients, always buying more than double the amount the recipe calls for because we almost always test it a second time; that's one reason our test kitchen had to have ample cold and dry storage. Before we start cooking, we prep the ingredients, measuring them, weighing them, and placing them around us in the order that they're called for in the recipe, along with any equipment required. This demands considerable counter space. The point of this mise-en-place (shown above), as the process is called, is to create a calm, organized work area; without this prep stage, we'd be too harried to write down all the visual cues, cooking times, and other telling details that are crucial to refining recipes. We also have to be diligent about cleaning up after ourselves as we cook, which is why the huge sinks and garbage cans sit within easy reach of the prep table. When it comes time to taste, the finished dish is set out on the display counter and we take notes on the editors' feedback. We press them for specifics: Are the flavors well balanced? If not, we make a note to adjust the seasonings. Is it crisp enough? No? Maybe on the next attempt we'll try a different browning technique. If the recipe is a flop, that's actually okay; a recipe tester can learn a lot from failures. —*Hunter Lewis*

THIS PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2); JAMES OSELAND (2)

1 Wall-mounted magnetic strips hold our collection of knives, which ranges from timeworn antiques to state-of-the-art specialty blades that various staffers have come to rely on during stints in restaurant kitchens. **2** One of the greatest benefits of our office's location is its proximity to the Union Square Greenmarket, where we purchase much of the farm-fresh produce we use, like these spring onions. **3** Kitchen assistant Vienna Bradley works at the deep, wide Kohler sink we reserve for scrubbing the endless parade of pots and pans we run through over the course of a day. A second, smaller sink is used for hand-washing and other tasks. **4** Kitchen director Hunter Lewis cooks at one of the kitchen islands, each of which is equipped with a grid of storage shelves for our everyday pots and pans. **5** To celebrate the completion of our kitchen, we invited two guest cooks, Satya Britten and Mohan, from the New York Hare Krishna Temple, to prepare a festive meal for Clodagh's staff and ours.

SOURCE

Plum Perfect

These fruits are a sweet end to the summer

BY RICHARD VILLADÓNIGA

ANDY MARIANI CAN'T GET ENOUGH of his plums. "Over there are beauty, burgundy, elephant heart, inca, laroda, october sun, grand claret, and padre," he says, as we walk through his orchard in Northern California's Santa Clara Valley. Andy's Orchard, as Mariani's business is called, sells 30 varieties of plum, but he grows another 30 cultivars in quantities too small for commercial sale. "People say there's a fine line between gardening and madness," he tells me, "and some of us cross it."

Plums are indigenous to nearly all the temperate parts of the Northern Hemisphere, and thousands of varieties have existed over the years. These days, however, the vast majority of plums grown in this country are those that have been bred for hardiness, not for flavor. Mariani (who has no connection to Mariani Packing Co., a large-scale California fruit purveyor) is trying to show customers what they've been missing. He has amassed a collection of old books describing fruit varieties no longer commercially available, and he combs through them, contacting nurseries, old farming families, and other collectors to see whether anyone can give him a cutting from which to start his own tree. He has also developed relationships with local universities and grows many of the best hybrids that come out of their agricultural programs.

Mariani introduces each new variety by planting only a tree or two, adding more if the fruit proves popular with friends and family. He sells a wide range of Asian plums, like the weeping santa rosa, which is a more flavorful cousin of the common supermarket variety, and harder-to-find European plums, like the yellow-streaked parfumée de septembre. Last year he also established a "preservation orchard" dedicated solely to plums in the greengage family, which are coveted in England and France and boast an intense, aromatic flavor that Mariani compares to plum jam's. This year he'll start selling many of these, including bavay's greengage, cambridge greengage, and the coveted reine des mirabelles, which is reputedly a cross between a French mirabelle plum and a greengage and has a slightly musky, honeyed flavor. Andy's Orchard's plums cost $25 for 12 small plums or six of the larger varieties. To order, call 408/782-7600 or visit www.andysorchard.com.

MICHAEL KRAUS

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Photographed at the Westin Dawn Beach Casino Photography: David Needleman

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CLASSIC

Brownie Points

Of schoolteachers, elves, and the origins of a celebrated American dessert

BY DANA BOWEN

FUNNY HOW A DESSERT as humble as the brownie can generate such passionate debate. I've argued at length with friends about the various merits of fudgy brownies, cakey brownies, brownies with nuts, brownies with frosting, and on and on, to the point where I've questioned what constitutes a brownie in the first place. While it's generally agreed that brownies should be made with eggs, flour, sugar, butter or oil, and chocolate and cut into squares, attempts at further definition tend to fall short. Such ambiguities prompted me to ponder some existential questions about the origins and various incarnations of this beloved home-baked treat.

So, I started poring through culinary encyclopedias, old recipe books, and newspaper archives. Most of the brownie genesis stories I came across smacked of culinary fakelore: a fire in a Chicago hotel that caused a harried cook to combine a cookie batter with a cake batter; a New England housewife who forgot to add leavening to her chocolate sheet cake. A few sources attributed the invention of the brownie to one Mildred Brown "Brownie" Schrumpf (1903–2001), a home economics teacher in Maine who was also a columnist for the *Bangor Daily News*. That appeared to explain why many old versions of the dessert were called Bangor brownies—except that the earliest recipe for Bangor brownies I found appeared in the *Boston Globe* in 1905, when Schrumpf was still in diapers. Indeed, further research revealed that many culinary historians ascribe the word *brownie* not to a person but to elves, specifically the sweets-loving characters drawn by the Canadian illustrator Palmer Cox in the late 1800s. (I also found out that there's a Scottish dessert made with brown sugar called broonies that may also take its name from those fictional sprites.)

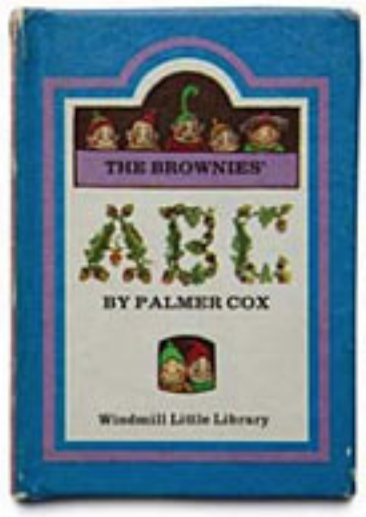
The earliest printed recipe for brownies dates to 1896, when the first edition of Fannie Farmer's seminal *Boston Cooking-School Cookbook* was published. The recipe in that book yielded a dessert that didn't look or taste at all like today's brownies; the bready treats were flavored with molasses instead of chocolate and were baked in individual molds. Then, in 1906, in keeping with a growing taste for chocolatey desserts, a new edition of the *Boston Cooking-School Cookbook* swapped chocolate for molasses in its chewy-brownie recipes. Other compilations soon followed its lead, most notably *Lowney's Cook Book*, published in 1907 by the Massachusetts chocolate company of the same name and written by a protégée of Farmer's, who used more chocolate in her recipe than other cooks had dared to previously. In 1908, another member of the Boston Cooking School circle, Maria Parloa, teamed up with the Boston-based chocolate company Baker's and created a brownie that was enriched with three eggs, vanilla, and baking powder, ushering into the American canon a more cakelike version of this easy-to-make, easy-to-customize dessert.

By the time the Betty Crocker company introduced its first brownie mix, in 1954, *Joy of Cooking* contained four very different brownie recipes. Though I gave up on store-bought mixes when I realized I could make better brownies just as effortlessly from scratch, I confess that some of my earliest lessons were gleaned from the back of a box: add an extra egg for cakier brownies; use less fat for fudgier ones. More recently, the New York–based baking instructor Nick Malgieri told me that the inclusion of less flour also makes for a fudgier, chewier brownie; his famous "supernatural" brownies are like a bar of fudge surrounded by a layer of chewy cake. I also learned that the type of flour used can make a difference (bread flour yields a denser texture than all-purpose) and that vegetable oil can make for moister, if less flavorful, brownies than butter.

When it comes to variations on the brownie theme, however, the

Facing page, from left, Katharine Hepburn's brownies; Nick's "supernatural" brownies; Krystal's espresso brownies (see page 48 for recipes).

THE BROWNIE: *from dainty dessert to* AMERICAN ICON



1887 | Canadian illustrator Palmer Cox publishes a book of verse depicting the Brownies, the elfin characters for which the dessert is believed to be named.

1897 | The Sears Roebuck catalogue offers brownies for the first time.

1954 | Betty Crocker introduces the first boxed brownie mix.

1960 | The earliest known mention of marijuana brownies appears in print, in a new edition of the *Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*, which refers to the treat as "haschich fudge".

1983 | Cookbook author Maida Heatter serves chocolate cheesecake brownies at a presidential economic summit in Williamsburg, Virginia.

2000 | For the first time, a brownie recipe—for cream cheese brownie pie—wins the annual Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest.

2008 | The total annual sales for boxed brownie mixes in the U.S. exceed $2.5 billion.

THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; COURTESY GENERAL MILLS; RON GLASSMAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS; FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

fudgy–cakey continuum is just the beginning. Consider Malgieri's brownies, which are crowned with a glossy, crackly crust. Why, I wondered, do some brownies possess that shiny, paper-thin patina, while others have a matte finish and look like collapsed chocolate cakes? "It's from the sugar," the chocolatier Jacques Torres told me when I posed that question to him. Then I encountered other bakers who had explored the topic and come up with different answers: the food scientist Shirley Corriher claims that the formation of a crust has to do with how aggressively you beat the batter. And Alice Medrich, in her book *Bittersweet* (Artisan, 2003), writes that the crust is a product of the cook's heating the chocolate to a high temperature before the other ingredients are added.

A Boston Cooking School brownie recipe from 1906 at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE113

Such disagreements notwithstanding, I've achieved a consistently good crust using a recipe credited to none other than the late actress Katharine Hepburn; I found it in Molly O'Neill's *New York Cookbook* (Workman, 1992) and instantly fell for these chewy, walnut-studded beauties. Aside from the crust, the one thing I've always liked about Hepburn's brownies is that they aren't intensely chocolatey; but that chocolatey flavor, I knew, was just what some brownie lovers look for. I began tinkering, hoping to learn how different kinds of chocolate affect taste and texture.

I started out with unsweetened chocolate, the historical preference, and came to the not so surprising conclusion that a high-quality chocolate (I tried 99 percent cacao Scharffen Berger) gives you a fuller flavor than a supermarket brand like Baker's. Then I moved on to bittersweet and semisweet chocolates, with their higher sugar content, and discovered that, although both varieties produced a glossier crust, the brownies made with semisweet chocolate were dramatically sweeter, even though the bittersweet type didn't contain that much less sugar. One reason for the disparity, I learned, is that bittersweet chocolate generally has more cacao, which tempers the sweetness with tannins. On a tip from Krystal Stone, a SAVEUR kitchen assistant who makes a mean espresso brownie, I also tried using cocoa powder, which produced darker, more strongly flavored bars.

I could have kept experimenting endlessly with different ingredients, but eventually the call of science gave way to the overwhelming desire to settle on a favorite brownie recipe or two, whip up a few batches, and then sit down with a tall glass of milk and eat.

RECIPE

Nick's "Supernatural" Brownies

MAKES 24 BROWNIES

Fudgy and moist, these brownies are made from a recipe that appears in *Chocolate: From Simple Cookies to Extravagant Showstoppers* by Nick Malgieri (HarperCollins, 1998).

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 8 oz. bittersweet chocolate, cut into 1/4" pieces
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. fine salt
- 1 cup flour

1. Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 9" x 13" baking pan with butter and line with parchment paper; grease paper. Set pan aside.

2. Pour enough water into a 4-quart saucepan that it reaches a depth of 1". Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Combine butter and chocolate in a medium bowl; set bowl over saucepan. Cook, stirring, until melted and smooth, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat; set aside.

3. Whisk together eggs in a large bowl. Add sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt; whisk to combine. Stir in chocolate mixture; fold in flour. Pour batter into prepared pan; spread evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, 30–35 minutes. Let cool on a rack. Cut and serve.

RECIPE

Katharine Hepburn's Brownies

MAKES 9 BROWNIES

A version of this recipe accompanied an interview with the actress Katharine Hepburn in the August 1975 issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. This brownie recipe, which calls for the smallest amount of flour of the three recipes on this page, produces incredibly chewy bars with a full but mellow chocolate flavor.

- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 2 oz. unsweetened chocolate
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup roughly chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 tsp. fine salt

1. Heat oven to 325°. Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan with butter. Line the pan with parchment paper; grease the paper. Set the pan aside.

2. Melt the butter and the chocolate together in a 2-quart saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Remove the pan from heat and stir in the sugar. Add the eggs and vanilla and stir to make a smooth batter. Add the walnuts, flour, and salt; stir until incorporated. Pour the batter into the baking pan and spread evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 40–45 minutes. Let cool on a rack. Cut and serve.

RECIPE

Krystal's Espresso Brownies

MAKES 9 BROWNIES

Cocoa powder gives SAVEUR staffer Krystal Stone's iced brownies a concentrated flavor.

- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 2 1/2 tbsp. instant espresso powder
- 1 cup chocolate-covered espresso beans (about 4 1/2 oz.; see page 107), coarsely ground in food processor
- 2 cups superfine sugar
- 2/3 cup unsweetened, dutch-process cocoa powder (see page 107)
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp. plus 1/8 tsp. fine salt
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup milk

1. Heat oven to 325°. Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan with butter. Line pan with parchment paper; grease paper. Bring 1/4 cup water to a boil in a 1-quart saucepan. Whisk in espresso; let dissolve. Whisk together espresso, beans, 1 cup sugar, 1/3 cup cocoa, flour, oil, 1 tsp. vanilla, 1/4 tsp. salt, baking powder, and eggs in a bowl. Pour batter into pan; spread evenly. Bake until set, 45–50 minutes. Let cool slightly.

2. To make icing, bring butter, milk, and remaining sugar, cocoa, vanilla, and salt to a boil in a 1-quart saucepan, while whisking. Pour icing over brownies; let harden. Cut and serve.

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CARIBBEAN FUSION

CAYMAN'S GRAND OLD HOUSE CHEF DE CUISINE FINDS HIS INSPIRATION EXPLORING THE SEA

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I was born in Nordenham, Germany, and grew up in Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, England. Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of the Roux brothers' restaurant Le Gavroche, the Waterside Inn, and eating frogs' legs with the world-champion juggler Kris Kremo at a fine-dining Italian restaurant in Oxford. Inspiration came first from my father, also a chef. On Saturday mornings my father and I would go into London to the Smithfield and Billingsgate markets to see the array of meats and fish on offer. When I was 15 my parents bought a corner shop and tearoom in Scotland. I went to culinary college in Inverness and was classically trained in French cookery, then worked at my parents' first restaurant.

TY SAWYER (3)

TOP: Chef Daniel Fink with one of his mouthwatering creations. ABOVE: Adventure, thrills, and tranquillity among the docile southern stingrays at Grand Cayman's famous Stingray City.

From there I moved to Germany and my first chef de cuisine position, in a Michelin-starred restaurant in Bonn. I learned the art of making simple dishes with fresh produce and herbs. Craving new adventure and new inspiration, I took an opportunity in Grand Cayman at the world-famous Grand Old House restaurant. I couldn't wait to use classical French techniques with the local Caribbean flavors. In this beautiful Caribbean paradise, I also found my passion for scuba diving and a "deeper" level of inspiration. I discovered the most beautiful adventure in the world, underwater, just off the steps of the Grand Old House. The sea inspires everyone here. On days off I explore the famous reefs off Cayman. It's as remarkable an adventure as exploring new tastes in the kitchen. And when my mind is stirred, new gourmet visions come flying in on the warm breeze. Our kitchen is always looking to expand our French/Caribbean culinary experiences; we've won awards from the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs for most innovative Caribbean dish and best appetizer, two best-of-show awards, and an award of merit from the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs for culinary expertise and presentation. But when I'm not in the kitchen, you'll find me out on the reef, wrapped in crystal-clear, warm Caribbean water exploring the world's last true frontier.

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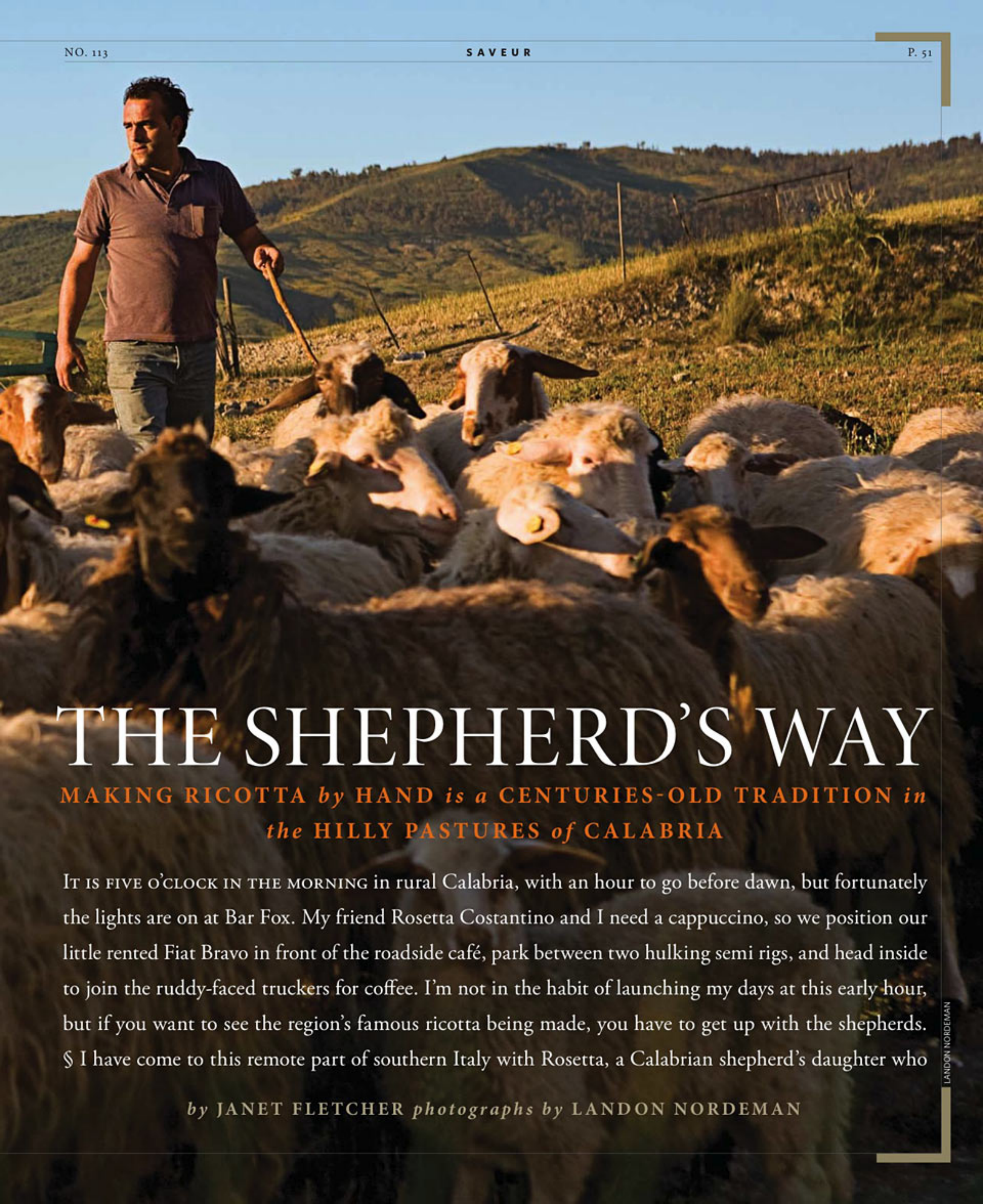
MALAYSIA It has so many exotic flavors, a unique and authentic culture, an incredible natural heritage, and some of the most amazing marine life, especially off Malaysian Borneo.

TOBAGO Tobago is a cultural melting pot. Dishes here deftly combine Indian, South American, and Caribbean flavors into an extraordinary culinary experience. And offshore, the reefs reflect the food and teem with a great variety of life, including manta rays and rivers of Creole wrasse.

Gino Bevilacqua at his family's sheep dairy in Torre Melissa, a Calabrian hill town.



THE SHEPHERD'S WAY

MAKING RICOTTA *by* HAND *is a* CENTURIES-OLD TRADITION *in the* HILLY PASTURES *of* CALABRIA

IT IS FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING in rural Calabria, with an hour to go before dawn, but fortunately the lights are on at Bar Fox. My friend Rosetta Costantino and I need a cappuccino, so we position our little rented Fiat Bravo in front of the roadside café, park between two hulking semi rigs, and head inside to join the ruddy-faced truckers for coffee. I'm not in the habit of launching my days at this early hour, but if you want to see the region's famous ricotta being made, you have to get up with the shepherds. § I have come to this remote part of southern Italy with Rosetta, a Calabrian shepherd's daughter who

by JANET FLETCHER *photographs by* LANDON NORDEMAN

LANDON NORDEMAN

Above, from left, fresh ricotta in rush baskets at Maiorano's dairy; Giovanni and Antonietta Bevilacqua. Facing page, ricotta and roasted pepper frittata.

emigrated to California 34 years ago, when she was 14. Rosetta, a cooking teacher and chemical engineer, has never forgotten the cheeses of her childhood, particularly fluffy ricotta, derived from the whey produced during the making of pecorino and other cheeses. Her father used to make it on the family farm near Verbicaro, a hill town a few hours northwest of where we are now. I met Rosetta four years ago, and in the time I have known her, I have heard innumerable ricotta rhapsodies and rants, the latter occasioned whenever circumstances force her to use a store-bought version.

In desperation, Rosetta and her mother, who lives near her in Oakland, developed a recipe that yields something close to their family's farmstead cheese. Their kitchen version, in my estimation, is impressively creamy, but Rosetta swears that it doesn't measure up to the sweet, delicate sheep's milk ricotta—handmade in small batches—for which her native region is known. So, we hatched a plan. We would travel to Calabria together in the late spring, prime season for ricotta as the ewes are producing plentiful milk and feasting on lush, fresh pasture. Rosetta would reacquaint herself with the ricotta of her youth, and I'd experience an artisanal specialty that has gone far to shape the rustic cuisine of Calabria. What if it *did* require a few early mornings?

Calabria's landscape is one of extremes. While the Tyrrhenian coast lures summer hordes to its modern beach resorts, including chic Tropea, the interior remains sparsely populated. Its sleepy villages can seem little changed since the early 20th century, when many thousands of Calabrians emigrated to the United States and Canada. And, although Calabria has one of the longest coastlines of any region in Italy, it is also mountainous; the craggy Pollino, Sila, and Aspromonte ranges form a rocky spine that stretches down the toe of Italy's boot. Sheep nuzzle in the foothills' grassy pastures, and goats thrive at higher elevations, scrambling up rocky slopes. The region's economy, still predominantly agricultural, relies in no small measure on sheep's and goats' milk for cheese making, an activity practiced here since Roman times.

We choose to base ourselves in Crotone, a Calabrian province that

RECIPE

Frittata con Ricotta e Peperoni

(Ricotta and Roasted Pepper Frittata)

SERVES 4–6

Calabrians sometimes add sliced cured sausage to this popular frittata on Easter, to celebrate the end of Lent and the freedom to eat meat again, according to Rosetta Costantino, the author's friend.

- **½ cup grated pecorino**
- **2 tbsp. roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- **1½ tsp. kosher salt**
- **1 tsp. chopped fresh oregano**
- **8 eggs, beaten**
- **Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 large yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced**
- **1 small waxy potato, peeled and sliced into ⅛" rounds**
- **1 red bell pepper, roasted, peeled, and cut into ¼" strips**
- **¾ cup homemade or store-bought ricotta**

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 425°. In a large bowl, whisk together ¼ cup of the pecorino, parsley, ½ tsp. of the salt, oregano, and eggs and season with black pepper. Set egg mixture aside.

2. Heat the oil in a 10" nonstick ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add the remaining salt, onions, and potatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned and soft, about 20 minutes.

3. Remove skillet from heat. Add the egg mixture to the skillet and stir to distribute the onions and potatoes evenly. Scatter the peppers over the top, spoon the ricotta over the mixture in 6 dollops, and sprinkle with the remaining pecorino. Bake until lightly browned and the center is set, about 15 minutes. Run a rubber spatula around the edges of the frittata to loosen it. Slide the frittata onto a serving plate. Season with more black pepper, if you like.

ABOVE: LANDON NORDEMAN (2); FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; MAP: THE M FACTORY

Above, from left, Giovanni Bevilacqua's work boots outside his house; family portraits in the Bevilacquas' living room.

hugs the Ionian coast, because the area is famed for its pecorino, the aged sheep's milk cheese that's a cornerstone of the Calabrian table. The production of pecorino yields whey—the cloudy liquid that separates from the curds during cheese making—which is the primary ingredient in traditional ricotta. Some cheese makers feed whey (which still contains some protein and fat) to livestock on their farms; others supplement the whey with fresh milk and reheat the mixture slowly until new curds form to create ricotta. (The word *ricotta* means recooked.) In contrast, most of the ricotta produced in the United States is made from whole cows' milk curdled with vinegar, a procedure that leads to a higher yield and a faintly sour flavor.

Ricotta is made throughout Italy, from Emilia-Romagna, where it fills tortellini, all the way south to Sicily, where the creamy cheese enriches the island's famous pastries, but in Calabria, cooks would be adrift without it. "It's a staple there because it was traditionally a shepherds' society," Rosetta says. When she was a child, all the *contadini*, the people who lived in the countryside, kept a few goats and sheep, which gave milk for farmhouse cheese. Such practices are vanishing as Calabrians move to the cities, but ricotta is still prominent in the daily diet here, one based largely on pork and vegetables. It moderates the heat of the fiery local pasta sauces seasoned with peperoncini. Children slather fresh ricotta on their breakfast toast, and home cooks add it to frittatas. In the rural restaurants and bakeries we visit, we encounter fresh ricotta dolloped on pasta with tomato sauce, layered with fried eggplant and tomato in a Calabrian variation of eggplant parmigiana, and accompanying hard-cooked egg and soppressata in the stuffed pizza known as pitta. Local shops also sell ricotta that has been salted and dried for long keeping. This firm, shavable ricotta salata, sometimes laced with crushed red peppers, appears on antipasto platters or is grated liberally over pasta. (See "Ricotta Ten Ways", below, to learn about other styles.)

Calabrian markets carry several types of fresh ricotta, some made at large-scale dairies from cows' milk, others on *(continued on page 58)*

JANET FLETCHER *is the author of* Cheese & Wine: A Guide to Selecting, Pairing, and Enjoying *(Chronicle Books, 2006) and the coauthor, with Rosetta Costantino, of a forthcoming book about the cooking of Calabria.*

RICOTTA TEN WAYS

Calabrian sheep's milk ricotta is just one of many varieties of the cheese; the ten described here are available in the United States. Ricotta infornata **1**, or baked ricotta, has a distinctive tan crust, a toasty flavor, and a firm but supple texture comparable to cheesecake's; Italians often eat it with bread or as part of an antipasto platter. Homemade ricotta **2**, made by adding rennet or an acid, like vinegar, to heated whole milk, causing curds to form, has a milky flavor that's suited to a wide variety of dishes. Ricotta affumicata **3**, or smoked ricotta, when grated over pasta or melted in a panini, lends a baconlike richness to the dish. Crushed red chile flakes are a common seasoning in numerous southern Italian dishes, and they're also what give ricotta salata al peperoncino **4** its piquant bite; the cheese makes an excellent addition to linguine with arrabbiata sauce. Faintly grassy and rich, sheep's milk ricotta **5**, or ricotta di pecora, works well as the focal point of a dish, whether eaten on crostini with honey and figs or tossed with pasta. Most factory-made ricotta **6**, like the Polly-O brand shown on the facing page, is produced from cows' milk and has a fine-grained curd; its mild flavor and consistent texture, achieved by the addition of stabilizers like gums, makes it a good choice for lasagne and other cooked dishes. Ricotta impastata **7**, or pastry ricotta, is whipped to create an ethereal texture and is sometimes sweetened; professional pastry chefs use it to make fluffy fillings for cannoli and sfogliatelle, a traditional Italian layered pastry. The dense and pungent fermented cheese known as ricotta forte **8** is a specialty of Gravina, a city in the southern Italian region of Puglia; this ricotta is aged from 60 days to a few years, and its flavor is reminiscent of blue cheese's. Ricotta salata **9** is salted, pressed, and then dried and aged for three months, which firms the cheese and yields a bright, mildly salty flavor; try crumbling it over salads or grating it into pasta dishes. Buffalo milk ricotta **10**, or ricotta di bufala, has a pleasingly gamy taste and a dense texture (owing to the higher fat content of buffalo milk). (See THE PANTRY, page 107, for sources.) —*Ben Mims*

ABOVE: LANDON NORDEMAN (2); FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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La Marchesa
BUFALA

Antonietta Bevilacqua prepares to collect the evening's milk, which has been resting overnight in the open air.

THIS PAGE: LANDON NORDEMAN; FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

RECIPE

Zucchine Ripiene con Ricotta

(Zucchini Stuffed with Ricotta)

SERVES 6

In this dish, zucchini are stuffed with the twin stars of Calabrian cheese making: pecorino and ricotta. Flecked with tomato and mint, they are equally good eaten hot or at room temperature on a warm summer day.

- 6 medium zucchini (about 2 lbs.), halved lengthwise
- 7 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded, and chopped
- 2 cups homemade or store-bought ricotta
- 3/4 cup grated pecorino
- 3/4 cup fresh bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2 tsp. dried mint, crumbled
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh oregano
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Using a small spoon, scoop out and discard pulp from each zucchini half, leaving a 1/4" rim around the edges. Heat 3 tbsp. of the olive oil in a 10" skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and onions; cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 6 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 4 minutes more. Remove from the heat and set aside.

2. In a medium bowl, stir together the ricotta, 1/4 cup of the pecorino, 1/4 cup of the bread crumbs, the parsley, mint, oregano, and egg yolks. Fold in the onion mixture and season with salt and pepper. Set the filling aside.

3. Arrange an oven rack about 7" from the broiler element and heat. Rub the insides of the zucchini with 2 tbsp. of the olive oil and season lightly with salt. Place zucchini cut side up on a foil-lined baking sheet and broil for 5 minutes. Remove baking sheet from oven and fill each zucchini half with enough of the ricotta mixture that it mounds slightly but doesn't spill over the edges of the zucchini. Sprinkle each stuffed zucchini with the remaining pecorino and bread crumbs and drizzle with the remaining olive oil. Broil until the zucchini are soft and the tops are lightly browned, 10–15 minutes.

(continued from page 54) local farms from goats' milk. But the most prized is the sheep's milk ricotta made on small farms: it has the scent of ewe and a richness that the others can't match. Although Calabria has no shortage of sheep, Rosetta and I soon learn that cheese-making shepherds aren't easy to find. Alfonso Maiorano, an esteemed pecorino producer in the province of Crotone, told us that he knows no one who still makes pecorino and ricotta as Rosetta's father did—with the raw milk of his own flock, warmed over a wood fire, cultured with bacteria present in the milk and in the air, coagulated with rennet, and molded in hand-woven rush baskets. The European Union has cracked down on practices it perceives as unhygienic, many of them part of the cheese-making process here for centuries. Even Maiorano has begun heat-treating his milk (a safety precaution that stops short of pasteurization) and has switched to plastic draining baskets, as has almost every producer who hopes to avoid the scrutiny of the EU. In frustration, most of the small-scale shepherds have abandoned commercial cheese making entirely, says Maiorano. Most of them sell only milk now.

We are dismayed by Maiorano's account and reluctant to accept that the 15-year-old EU has so swiftly stamped out methods that have prevailed here for centuries. Surely somebody knows somebody who knows a defiant shepherd still making ricotta the old-fashioned way.

We return to our rooms at the nearby Agriturismo Dattilo, a working farm that accommodates guests. Dattilo encompasses a well-maintained organic olive grove, a vineyard, and a four-year-old restaurant that, in recent years, has developed an excellent reputation for its creative use of traditional Calabrian ingredients—eggplant, salt cod, bottarga, peperoncino, wild fennel, sardella (a spicy anchovy spread), and, of course, ricotta. At dinner on this evening, we savor the local ricotta in several guises: stuffed in grilled calamari; fashioned into an elegant version of ricotta fritters, a Calabrian home favorite; and starring in a spuma di ricotta al caffè, a whipped ricotta and coffee mousse that tastes like caffèlatte in pudding form.

The next day, we recount our shepherd predicament to Margherita Amasino, a 23-year-old cook at Dattilo who was raised in the nearby town of Torre Melissa, in the hopes that she might have some *contadino* connections. She calls her mother, who calls an uncle, and we soon have our

HOW TO MAKE RICOTTA AT HOME

Traditionally, ricotta was made by reheating whey left over from the cheese-making process; these days it can still be made from whey or whey fortified with milk or cream (to increase the yield), or by extracting curds from whole milk, which is the norm in commercial dairies. The author's friend Rosetta Costantino led us to an easy method that produces the sweet, earthy flavor of old-world ricotta by combining whole milk with rennet, which consists of enzymes that act as a coagulant. We tried coagulating ricotta with lemon juice, vinegar, and buttermilk but ended up with neutral-tasting, large, crumbly curds. Rennet produces moister, tastier curds, as it leaves more proteins intact and does not inhibit the milk's flavor compounds as an acid would. The temperature to which the milk is heated is also important. Bringing the temperature up to 200° sweetens the milk and readies its proteins for coagulation. It also causes the curds to retain more whey, for a creamier, smoother cheese. To make about 4 1/2 cups of ricotta, heat 1 gallon whole milk and 3/4 cup heavy cream over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon and taking care not to scorch the milk, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the milk reads 200°. Skim foam from surface of milk. Pour milk into another pot to facilitate cooling. **1** Add 2 tsp. kosher salt to milk; stir to dissolve. **2** Carefully nestle pot in a bowl of ice water and stir to bring the temperature down. **3** When milk reaches 125°, **4** mix 1 tsp. liquid animal rennet (see page 107) with 1/4 cup cold water in a bowl, **5** then stir into the milk. Let stand undisturbed until the milk has visibly thickened, about 10 minutes. With a wooden spoon, cut a large *X* in the coagulated surface of the milk. Stir quickly for 15 to 20 seconds to break up the solids. **6** Using a fine sieve, slowly stir milk in one direction around edge of pot, so that the curds begin to separate from the whey. Continue to stir gently until you have gathered a large mass of curds. **7** Gently scoop curds, in batches, into 2 disposable ricotta molds (see page 107) or into a cheesecloth-lined colander set over a sheet tray. **8** Allow excess whey to drain from ricotta for 1 hour. **9** Use cheese immediately or refrigerate, covered, for up to 3 days. —*Hunter Lewis*

FACING PAGE: JAMES OSELAND (9)

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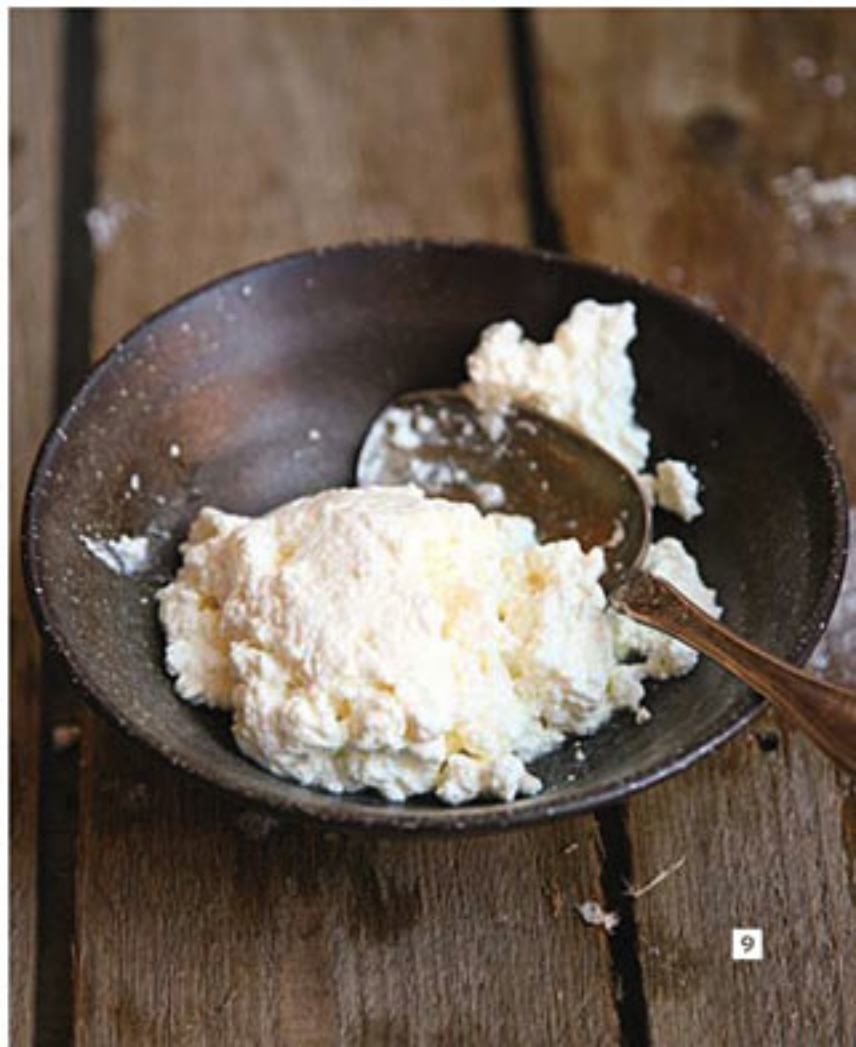
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Above, from left, fried ricotta fritters; a street in Crotone, the main city of the province of the same name. Facing page, a customer in a Crotone butcher shop.

RECIPE

Polpette di Ricotta

(Ricotta Fritters)

MAKES 20 FRITTERS

Chilling the ricotta-prosciutto mixture after mixing it allows the flavors to come together and makes the balls easier to form.

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1 14-oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 6 basil leaves, torn in half
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup homemade or store-bought ricotta
- 1 cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup grated pecorino
- 1/3 cup grated mozzarella
- 1 tsp. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest
- 1/8 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 3 egg yolks plus 2 eggs
- 4 oz. thinly sliced prosciutto, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 cup dried bread crumbs
- Canola oil, for frying

1. Heat olive oil in a 2-quart saucepan over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 5 minutes. Add chile flakes; toast for 1 minute. Add tomatoes and basil, bring to a boil, lower heat to medium, and cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce begins to thicken, 6–8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Reduce heat to low; keep warm.

2. Stir together ricotta, fresh bread crumbs, pecorino, mozzarella, parsley, lemon zest, nutmeg, egg yolks, and prosciutto in a medium bowl. Season with salt and pepper; cover and refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

3. Put flour, whole eggs, and dried bread crumbs into 3 separate shallow dishes; whisk eggs. Using your hands, form chilled ricotta mixture into 1½" balls. Working with 1 ball at a time, dredge in flour, then eggs, then bread crumbs, shaking off any excess. Transfer to a parchment paper-lined sheet tray.

4. Pour enough canola oil into a 4-quart saucepan that it reaches a depth of 2". Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer inserted in the oil registers 350°. Working in batches, fry the ricotta balls, turning occasionally, until golden brown, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the balls to a paper towel-lined plate. Serve with the tomato sauce.

FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; LANDON NORDEMAN (2)

shepherd. Giovanni Bevilacqua, Amasino's great-uncle, would be happy to let us observe his cheese making, but we must be at his farm by sunrise tomorrow. Amasino agrees to accompany us and suggests that we meet for coffee at Bar Fox before heading into the hills.

When we arrive in Torre Melissa, a winegrowing hill town about six miles inland, dawn is casting its glow over the grapevines that line the dirt road where Giovanni and his wife, Antonietta, have their small farm. Giovanni, a kind-faced man in his 70s, greets us at the car and then walks us over to a brick shed where he makes pecorino and ricotta to sell to his neighbors. Four metal buckets filled with last night's milk hang from a rod outside; they have been there all night, cooled by the evening air, slowly building up the bacteria that will hasten the coagulation of the morning's fresh milk when the two batches are mixed—a first step in the production of pecorino. The Bevilacquas' son, Gino—a 35-year-old with dark, wavy hair and a pack of Marlboros in his shirt pocket—is in the pasture, milking ewes. The morning air is soft and calm, the country silence broken only by the splashing of milk into pails and the tinny clang of sheep bells.

Five more great ricotta recipes at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE113

While Gino milks, Antonietta and Giovanni work in the cheese shed, warming last night's milk in a large cauldron that's heated from below by a wood fire. When the evening milk reaches the temperature of the morning milk—about 86 degrees Fahrenheit—Antonietta pools the two batches in the cauldron and adds the rennet, a natural coagulant containing enzymes extracted from a lamb's stomach. Now we must wait for the milk to separate into the soft curds that will become pecorino cheese and the liquid whey that will eventually yield ricotta.

To pass the time, Rosetta and I drive into town to get some day-old bread from the local baker; we hope to persuade the Bevilacquas to make ricotta 'mpanata, the traditional shepherd's breakfast of stale bread softened in warm whey, then whipped with ricotta. When we return, at eight-thirty, Giovanni is enjoying a tumbler of homemade wine outdoors with a neighbor. We follow him into the cheese shed, where the sheep's milk has coagulated into what looks like thick yogurt. He checks the consistency with a soup spoon and then pokes a wooden dowel into the

vat, stirring vigorously to break up the curds, which float to the surface like small clumps of meringue before sinking to the bottom. Then Giovanni rolls up his sleeves, washes his arms in a nearby sink, and plunges them into the vat. Up come masses of slippery curd, which he piles in mounds in seven pecorino draining baskets. After the curds drain, they will be turned out, sprinkled with salt, and transferred to wooden racks in an adjacent storeroom.

It is only nine o'clock, but the day feels half over, and there is still ricotta to make. Gino rekindles the fire, and Antonietta lines up plastic ricotta baskets on the draining table. She adds salt to the whey that's left in the cauldron, along with a little fresh milk to improve the yield; then, as the vat heats up, she stirs, and stirs some more. Steam rises, warming the room, as Antonietta skims froth from the whey's watery surface. In an instant, the ricotta forms. "See how it's floating?" Giovanni says of the curds bobbing to the surface. "See how it comes up?" Soon the surface is a cottony sea of white, and Giovanni kills the fire. With a perforated ladle, he skims the cauldron's surface and offers us a taste of the fresh ricotta. It is utterly enchanting: soft, sweet, and silky, a world apart from the grainy American supermarket versions. I don't have to ask Rosetta's opinion: the grin on the shepherd's daughter's face tells me that this is the real thing.

Working quickly, with the fluid motions of people who have done the same task daily for decades, Giovanni and Antonietta scoop the fragile curds into plastic baskets. Giovanni pulls out his pocketknife to cut up the bread, fills a large wooden bowl with the crusty cubes, and ladles some warm whey over the top. Once the bread has softened, he adds several spoonfuls of ricotta and stirs the mixture into a smooth porridge.

Seated at the Bevilacquas' dining table, Rosetta and I dip spoons into the ricotta 'mpanata. It is sweet, milky, and about as comforting as a down pillow. Antonietta urges us to have more because Giovanni, in what I am coming to recognize as standard Calabrian hospitality, has made enough for ten. "My uncle would say, 'If you don't eat it all, the sheep won't give milk tomorrow,'" says Antonietta. And so we eat, savoring the essence of fresh sheep's milk and reliving a moment from long ago.

METHOD

Spuma di Ricotta al Caffè

(Ricotta and Coffee Mousse)

The recipe for this elegant, easy-to-make dessert (facing page) is based on one prepared at Ristorante Dattilo in Calabria. Purée 2 cups store-bought ricotta in a blender until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl; set aside. Whip together 1 cup cold heavy cream and 1/3 cup sugar in a large bowl until soft peaks form. Set aside. Bring 1/4 cup water to a boil in a small saucepan; remove from heat. Whisk 2 tbsp. of the water with 2 tbsp. instant espresso in a small bowl. Whisk remaining water with 1 tbsp. powdered gelatin in another small bowl until dissolved. Stir espresso mixture into ricotta, then gelatin mixture; fold in cream in 3 stages. Chill mixture for 1 hour, then transfer to a pastry bag fitted with a star tip. Pipe mixture into 6 sundae glasses; refrigerate until set, about 1 hour. Garnish with shaved chocolate. Serves 6.

THE GUIDE

CALABRIA

Dinner with drinks and tip:

MODERATE *$35–$59* EXPENSIVE *Over $60*

The coastal city of Crotone, which is easily accessible by rail and air (Air One, a Lufthansa partner, offers daily connections from Rome), serves as an ideal jumping-off point for exploring Calabria. To find additional hotels and farm stays, or agriturismos, in Crotone and nearby towns and villages, visit www.venere.com.

WHERE TO STAY

AGRITURISMO "DATTILO" *contrada Dattilo, Strongoli Marina (39/0962/865-613; www.dattilo.it). Double: $53 per person.* With eight comfortable apartments with kitchens, this farmstay about 12 miles from Crotone allows guests a glimpse of life on a working olive oil and wine estate. In the morning, you can harvest your own fruit from the farm's many fig, blood orange, and mulberry trees. The attached restaurant (see "Where to Eat", below) is renowned for its innovative takes on local specialties, such as ricotta fritters and grilled calamari. Don't pass up the 'nduja, a spicy pork spread.

AGRITURISMO "LE PUZELLE" *S.S. 107/bis contrada Puzelle, Santa Severina (39/0962/51-004; www.lepuzelle.it). Double: $54 per person.* This eight-room farmstay, in a thoughtfully restored farmhouse half an hour from the Ionian Sea and the Sila Mountains, offers a splendid Sunday lunch, attended by local families and featuring excellent regional cooking.

FATTORIA IL BORGHETTO *località Capo Bianco, Isola di Capo Rizzuto (39/0962/796-223; www.fattoriailborghetto.it). Double: $155.* Built in the style of a stately country farmhouse, this four-year-old inn near Crotone occupies the grounds of a working farm that produces much of the food offered to guests, from sheep's milk ricotta to prosciutto.

WHERE TO EAT

MAX TRATTORIA ENOTECA *via Togliatti, Cirò Marina (39/0962/373-009; www.trattoria.it). Moderate.* Fresh-caught fish is the star of the show at this rustic trattoria and wine bar in the seaside town of Cirò Marina. Start with an antipasto platter showcasing the spicy local sardella (a spread made with baby anchovies), and then move on to the outstanding cavatelli with superb fish ragù.

RISTORANTE DATTILO *contrada Dattilo, Strongoli Marina (39/0962/865-613; www.dattilo.it). Expensive.* One of Calabria's most acclaimed restaurants, Dattilo updates local Calabrian fare with modern flourishes while staying true to local tastes (the ricotta-stuffed squash blossoms are a favorite). In the summer, sit outside in the lovely bougainvillea-filled veranda.

WHAT TO DO

LIBRANDI *S.S. 106, contrada da S. Gennaro, Cirò Marina (39/0962/31-518).* This internationally known winery, long established in the region, focuses on indigenous red grape varieties such as magliocco and gaglioppo. In the winery's tasting room, guests can sample the estate's signature wines: the rich, full-bodied Magna Megonio and the aromatic Gravello.

MUSEO DELLA CIVILTÀ CONTADINA *S.S. 106, Torre di Guardia Aragonese, Torre Melissa (39/0962/370-056).* Situated in a 15th-century Aragonese tower, this small museum offers a unique window onto Calabrian rural life. Lovingly crafted displays shed light on cheese making, weaving, and the other everyday tasks of a traditional farm in southern Italy.

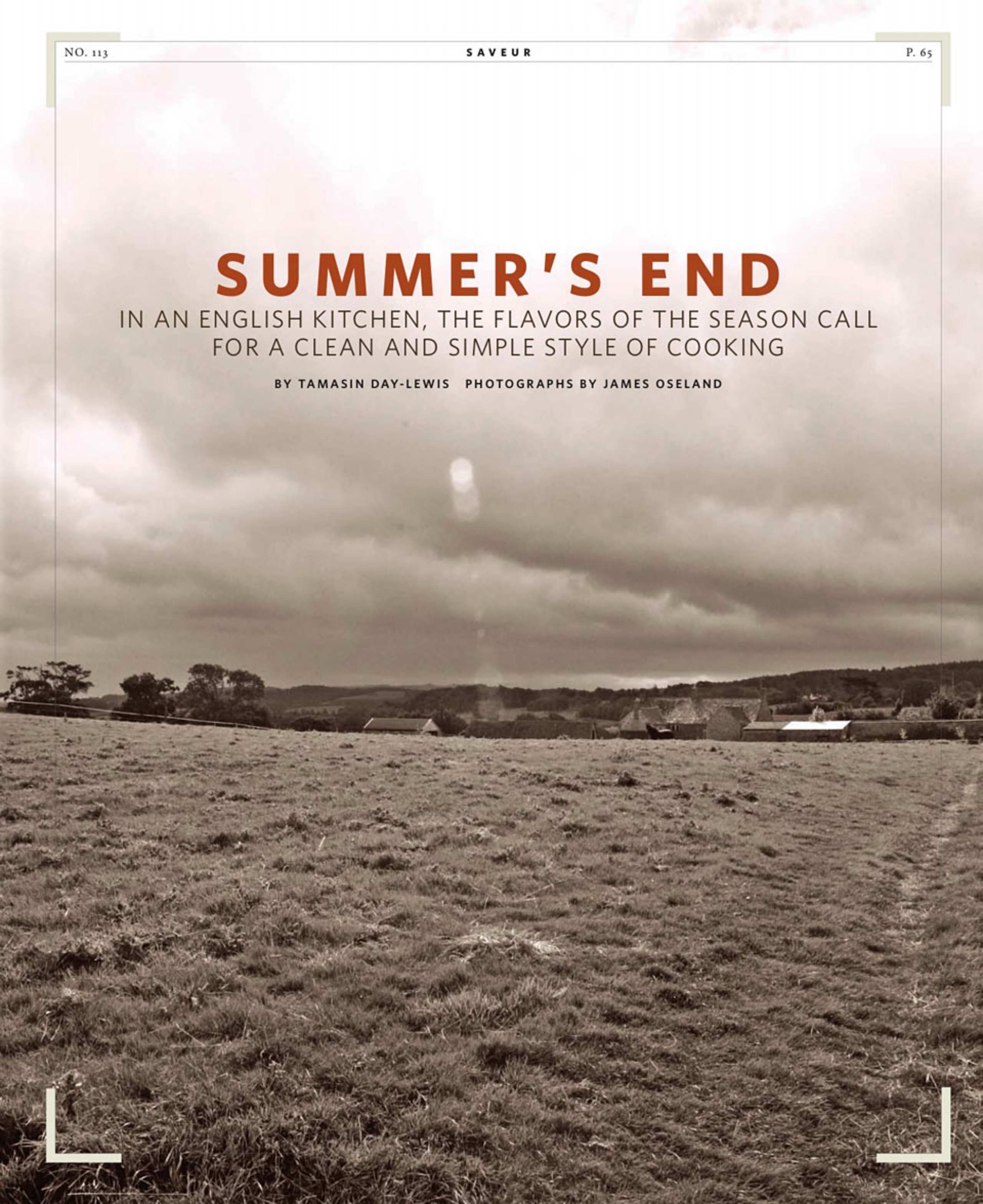
LANDON NORDEMAN

Grilled steak with sauce vierge, this page. Facing page, a view of the Somerset countryside near author Day-Lewis's home.

SUMMER'S END

IN AN ENGLISH KITCHEN, THE FLAVORS OF THE SEASON CALL FOR A CLEAN AND SIMPLE STYLE OF COOKING

BY TAMASIN DAY-LEWIS PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES OSELAND



ENGLISH SUMMER

SEPTEMBER. WE BEGIN TO batten down the hatches for the approaching dark, even as we rejoice in the last fling of abundance the season throws upon us. That is the curious polarity we face at this time of year, particularly those of us who are country dwellers. § Somerset, where I live, in the southwest of England, is a county of narrow lanes and high hedges as well as great expanses of common land with wild ponies, brilliant golden gorse, and blue moorland bilberries. The poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth drew inspiration from the same landscape when they lived here at the end of the 18th century. Somerset is apple-growing country; most small farmers still keep their own presses and make rough cider, or scrumpy, as it is known locally. The village of Cheddar, a half hour's drive from my house, gives its name to what is arguably England's finest hard cheese, and my neighbor Jamie Montgomery makes the very best version, matured in giant wheels wrapped in muslin, on his family farm. At this time of year, blackberries bleed into palms and picking fingers, and walnuts stain skin nicotine—no scrubbing diminishes it—but clawing the wet, knobbled nuts from their green shells is a rite of passage.

My house dates from 1450 and is built of local Quantock sandstone, whose warm, mellow, terra-cotta tones reflect the surrounding red earth. When I bought the house, six years ago, it had a leaky roof, waist-high damp running up the walls, and antiquated heating, plumbing, and wiring. The challenge was to return it to its former glory while making it fit for 21st-century habitation. There was a tumbledown walled garden, in which I planted fruit trees—mulberry, walnut, damson, greengage plum, apple, fig, crab apple, and peach—to create an orchard. I also cultivated the soft fruits our climate suits so well: red and black currants, gooseberries, raspberries, and loganberries.

An ancient bread oven remains inside the great fireplace in the dining room. I have recently restored it to use for baking focaccia, pita bread, and pizzas, and I am experimenting with roasting a whole chicken in the scented embers of oak and apple wood. In my kitchen I cook on a battleship-size, six-oven Aga range, at once the soul of the house and the best roaster, baker, and overnight simmerer of them all. I built my kitchen from scratch, in apple green with a worktable of solid oak. It comes into its own at this cusp of the season, before we dare switch on the heating and admit the winter. We huddle near the Aga for warmth and for every first, fugitive scent of what's cooking.

I TAUGHT MYSELF to cook with Elizabeth David's classic books—*French Country Cooking*, *French Provincial Cooking*, and *A Book of Mediterranean Food*—in one hand and Jane Grigson's *English Food*, *Vegetable Book*, and *Fruit Book* in the other. Elizabeth David opened up Britain to a new world of food, and to all the glamour and exotica of ingredients, after *(continued on page 71)*

TAMASIN DAY-LEWIS'S *latest book is* All You Can Eat: 1,000 Recipes *(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008). Her most recent article for* SAVEUR *was "Dream Whip" (May 2007).*

METHOD

Mashed Potatoes

When preparing these potatoes (right), use a ricer to create a luxuriously smooth texture (see page 104 for more about this tool). Peel 2½ lbs. russet potatoes (the author uses king edwards; russets are a floury American equivalent) and cut into 1" chunks. Place potatoes in a 4-quart saucepan and cover with cold salted water. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until the tines of a fork slide easily into the potatoes, 15–20 minutes. Drain. Meanwhile, heat 1½ cups heavy cream and 8 tbsp. unsalted butter in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until butter is melted and cream is hot. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Working in batches, pass the potatoes through a ricer into the hot cream mixture. Beat the potatoes vigorously with a whisk until smooth and creamy. Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste. Serves 4–6.

RECIPE

Grilled Steak with Sauce Vierge

SERVES 4

Sauce vierge (literally, virgin sauce, a reference to its uncooked character) belongs to a family of fresh French Mediterranean sauces that differ greatly from the rich, stock-based sauces commonly associated with classical French cooking. Also called green sauce, sauce aux herbes, and sauce verte, it is usually a piquant mixture of olive oil, herbs, mustard, capers, olives, and other aromatics. In this version, chiles add a spicy, new-world dimension. Besides accompanying this steak (pictured, page 64), this sauce goes well with grilled or sautéed pork chops or tuna.

- **¼ cup roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley**
- **1 tbsp. capers**
- **12 large green olives, such as cerignola, pitted and roughly chopped**
- **6 oil-packed anchovy filets, drained and finely chopped**
- **4 cornichons, roughly chopped**
- **1 shallot, finely chopped**
- **1 clove garlic, finely chopped**
- **1 jalapeño, stemmed and finely chopped**
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 tbsp. dijon mustard**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **4 ½"-thick top sirloin steaks (about 2 lbs.)**

1. On a cutting board, pile together the parsley, capers, olives, anchovies, cornichons, shallots, garlic, and jalapeño. With a large knife, finely chop and scrape the ingredients to combine.

2. Transfer the parsley mixture to a large bowl and stir in 6 tbsp. of the olive oil and the mustard with a fork to make a thick and chunky sauce. (Drizzle in more olive oil for a thinner consistency, if you like.) Season with salt and pepper. Set the sauce aside at room temperature to let rest for 30 minutes, to allow the flavors to mingle.

3. Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill or heat a gas grill to high heat. Rub steaks with the remaining olive oil and season lightly with salt and pepper. Grill steaks, turning once, until lightly browned and medium rare, about 2–3 minutes per side. Transfer steaks to a platter and let rest for 3 minutes. Stir the sauce (it will begin to separate slightly as it sits) and spoon it over the steaks. Serve hot or at room temperature.

The author, Day-Lewis (right), and Georgie, a friend, share a lunch of steak with sauce vierge and mashed potatoes along with runner beans fresh from the garden.

RECIPE

Blackberry and Apple Cake

SERVES 8–10

Loaded with ripe fruit, this moist cake (right) is a cross between two classic English desserts, sponge cake and summer pudding.

- 3/4 cup softened unsalted butter, plus more for greasing pan
- 1 1/2 lbs. fresh blackberries (about 6 cups)
- 1 tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 3 granny smith apples, cored, peeled, and quartered
- 1/3 cup apple brandy, such as calvados
- 2 1/2 cups cake flour
- 2 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. fine salt
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 cup plus 2 tbsp. superfine sugar
- 4 eggs
- Crème fraîche, for garnish (optional)

1. Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 9" springform pan with butter. Line bottom of pan with a parchment paper circle; grease paper. Wrap outside of pan with foil to prevent drips; set aside. In a small bowl, toss 2 cups blackberries with brown sugar; set aside to let macerate.

2. Meanwhile, cut each apple quarter into 1/8" slices; toss with apple brandy in a bowl; set aside. Sift together cake flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt into a bowl; set aside. In another bowl, stir together milk, vanilla, and lemon zest; set aside. Using a standing mixer with a paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar on medium speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating for 15 seconds after each addition. Reduce mixer speed to low. Alternately add flour and milk mixtures in thirds, beginning and ending with flour, until just incorporated. Scrape down sides of bowl with rubber spatula and gently fold in the apple-calvados mixture.

3. Transfer batter to the prepared pan; spread evenly. Scatter remaining blackberries over top of batter. Bake until golden and a toothpick inserted into center of cake comes out clean, about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Let cake cool in pan on a rack for 30 minutes; unmold, then cool completely. Mash macerated blackberries through a sieve into a bowl; discard seeds. Serve cake slices drizzled with the blackberry juice and dollops of crème fraîche (if using).

OF MEDITERRANEAN FOOD

berries. Put them back in the halves of melon, t on the ice.

nanas and cut in half. Place in baking dish with r, orange and lemon juice, nutmeg, cinnamon, ney, and a glass of rum. Place strips of lemon l bake for about 30 minutes in a moderate oven. be thick and syrupy.

be delicious; it can also be very nasty indeed. e which includes the making of the syrup which

le, 1 pear, 1 grapefruit, 2 bananas, 3 fresh figs, 2 slices r fresh or tinned.

ing 2 teacups of water to the boil; throw in 10 f the peel of an orange cut in strips. Boil for 5 the syrup to cool.

carefully, put it into a glass dish and pour over s of maraschino, and the prepared syrup.

at the fruit salad should be very well iced, and it l several hours before it is needed.

on, ¼ lb butter, ½ oz sugar, 4 eggs.

in water for 2 or 3 hours. Stew them slowly and nice whole apricots for the garnish, and put the e, keeping the juice separately, and reserve 2 purée, also for the garnish. Now put the purée nd add gradually the sugar, the butter, and the stirring all the time until you have a smooth it to cool. Fold in the stiffly beaten whites of the whole mixture into a buttered soufflé dish and

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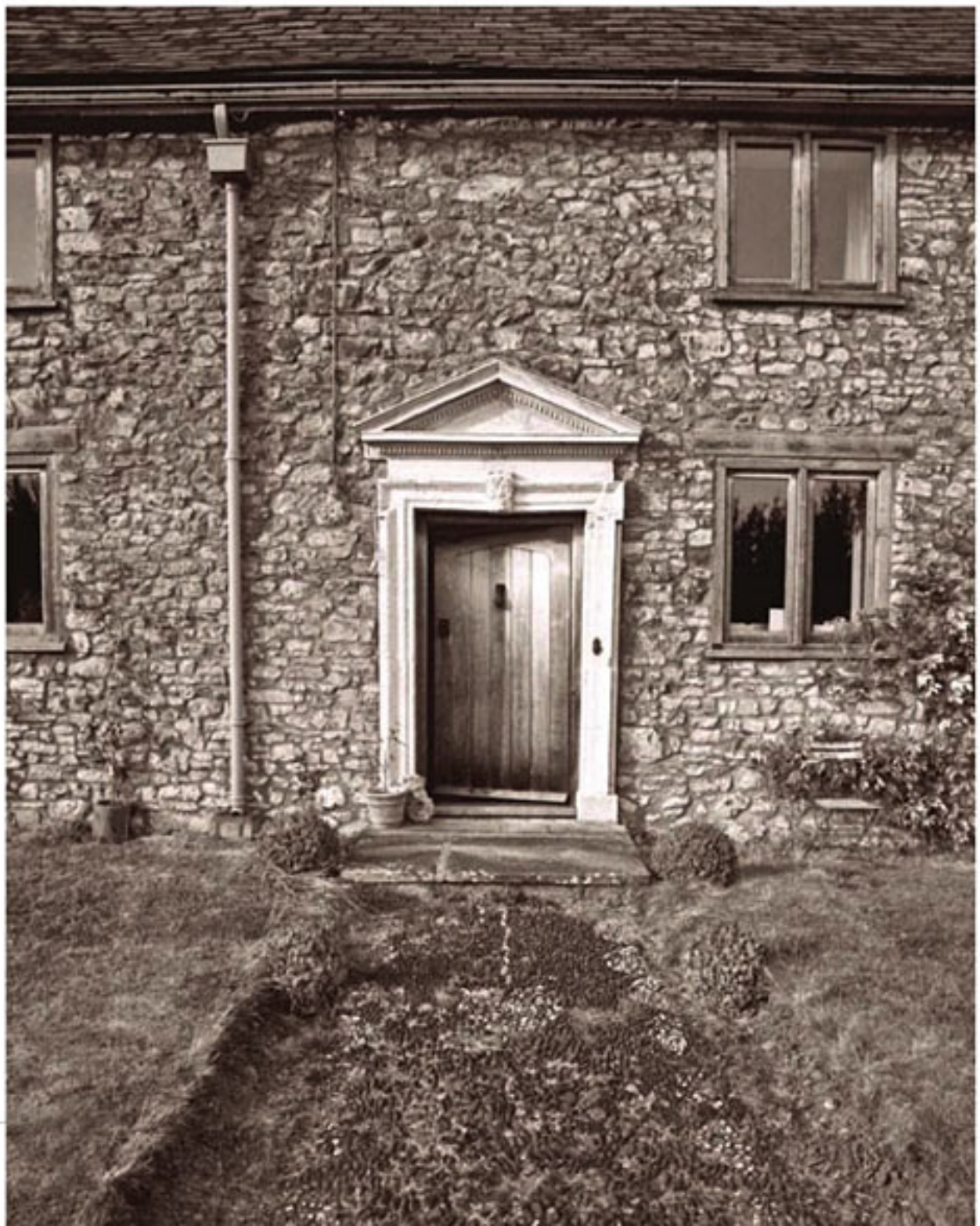


ENGLISH SUMMER

(continued from page 66) years of war and rationing. Jane Grigson, the scholar cook, restored great recipes to the canon of British food that bad ingredients, industrialization, and food processing had made us forget. These two writers taught a whole generation of British cooks the meaning of *cuisine du terroir*, cooking with a strong sense of place.

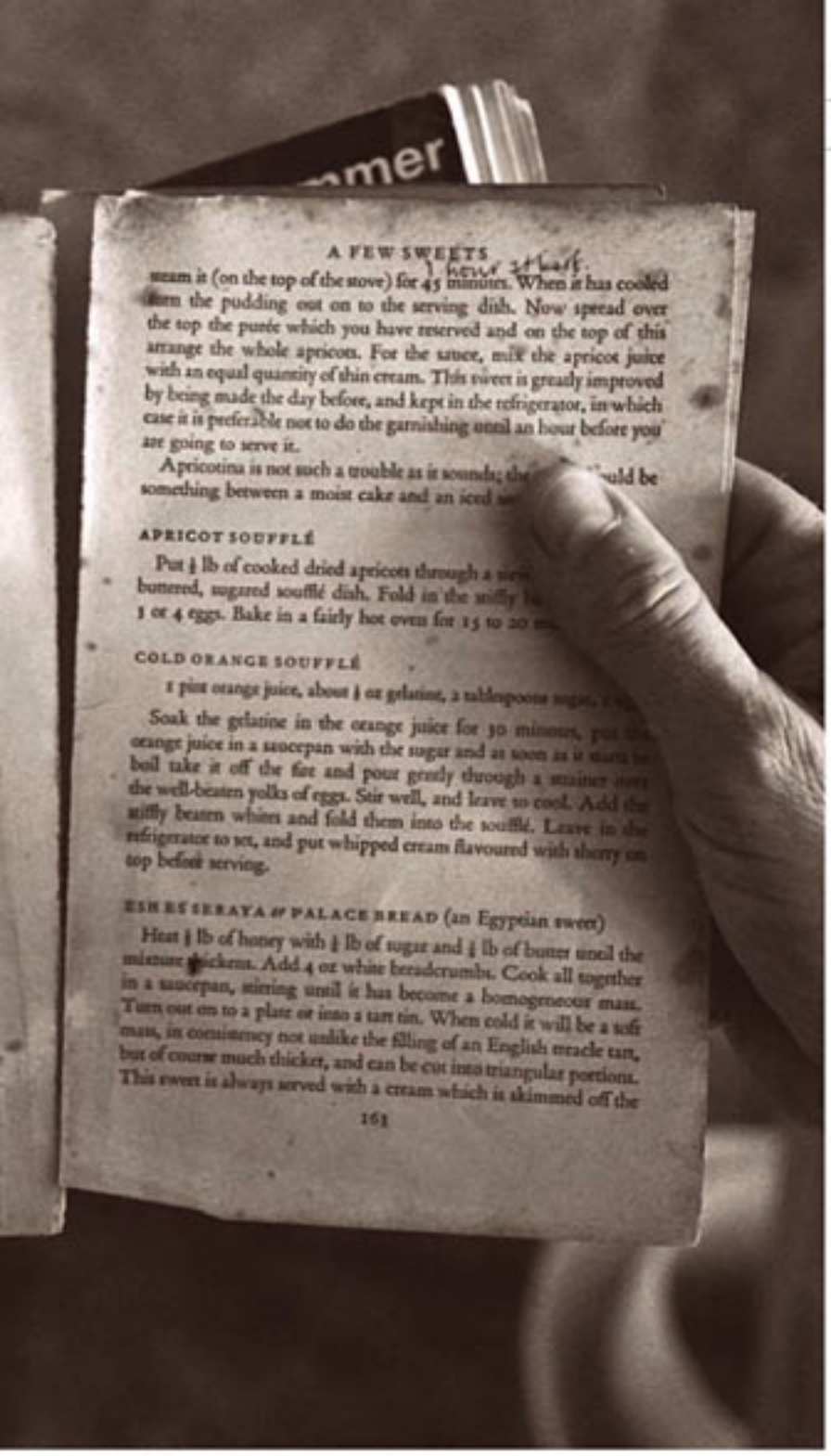
One day my old friend Georgie, who comes for breakfast every morning after she's fed her horse and donkeys, arrives to find me chopping herbs and squeezing lemons. She takes one look at the produce piled on the kitchen table and decides to stay for lunch. Virtually everything has been grown or made within 30 miles of my house: apples from my orchard, blackberries from my hedgerow, crème fraîche from a nearby dairy, eggs from a neighbor's farm. The steak comes from the Wild Beef company, run by a friend on the grassy moors of our sister county Devon.

We turn to red meats and dark-berried cakes at summer's end, wanting something more substantial as the heat ebbs and our appetites grow. Today, I boil and purée floury king edward potatoes and then whip them along with hot cream and melted unsalted butter to velvety smoothness. I make a dazzlingly red sorbet with raspberries that are still splurting juice and should last until November on the plant. It makes a perfect accompaniment for a blackberry and apple cake flavored with a little cinnamon. I always use wild blackberries; cultivated ones don't have the same sharpness or intensity of flavor.

ONCE THE SHOOTING season starts, I shall have pheasant and partridge. Farmer friends will bring me wild mallards in full plumage, ready to pluck and gut. They will hang in the barn for a week, until they taste properly gamy. At the start of the season I'll roast them; later, when the birds are scrawnier and tougher, I'll casserole them with barley and apple, or with cabbage, salty chorizo, and sweet chestnuts.

This is the time of year when I peer closely at the spiky sloe bushes tucked into the hedgerows along the road. Once the small, purple berries look ripe, I pick them, prick each with a silver pin, and submerge them in sugar and Plymouth gin, my favorite brand, from Devon. In two years' time my sloe gin will make an ideal winter fuel for a hip flask. The damson tree in my garden has just fruited for the first time, and I will turn its plums into sorbet and steep them in gin as I do the sloes. There's just enough fruit this first season for a single jar of damson gin, with its almondy back notes from the plums' cracked kernels. Every so often, when I remember to, I shake the jar and turn it the other way up. Each time, the liquid stains darker, from palest pink to rich ruby, from garnet to purple.

When the apples are ready for harvesting, all the local growers and cider makers celebrate Apple Day. A great crowd of us gathers in the orchard of my neighbor Julian Temperley, who pours a libation of his splendid ten-year-old Somerset cider brandy around a tree to bless the crop. Julian grows many of the old varieties, and their names read like those of figures in a fairy tale: wife of bath, slack-m'girdle, stoke red, kingston black. For lunch there are crisp eating apples served with wedges of Jamie Montgomery's cheddar. This is true *cuisine du terroir*: the absolute best, freshest ingredients with as little as possible done to them. The harvest is in, and we are eating and drinking it.



Clockwise from top left: blackberry and apple cake; a well-worn volume by Elizabeth David; raspberry sorbet; the author's home in Somerset.

METHOD

Raspberry Sorbet

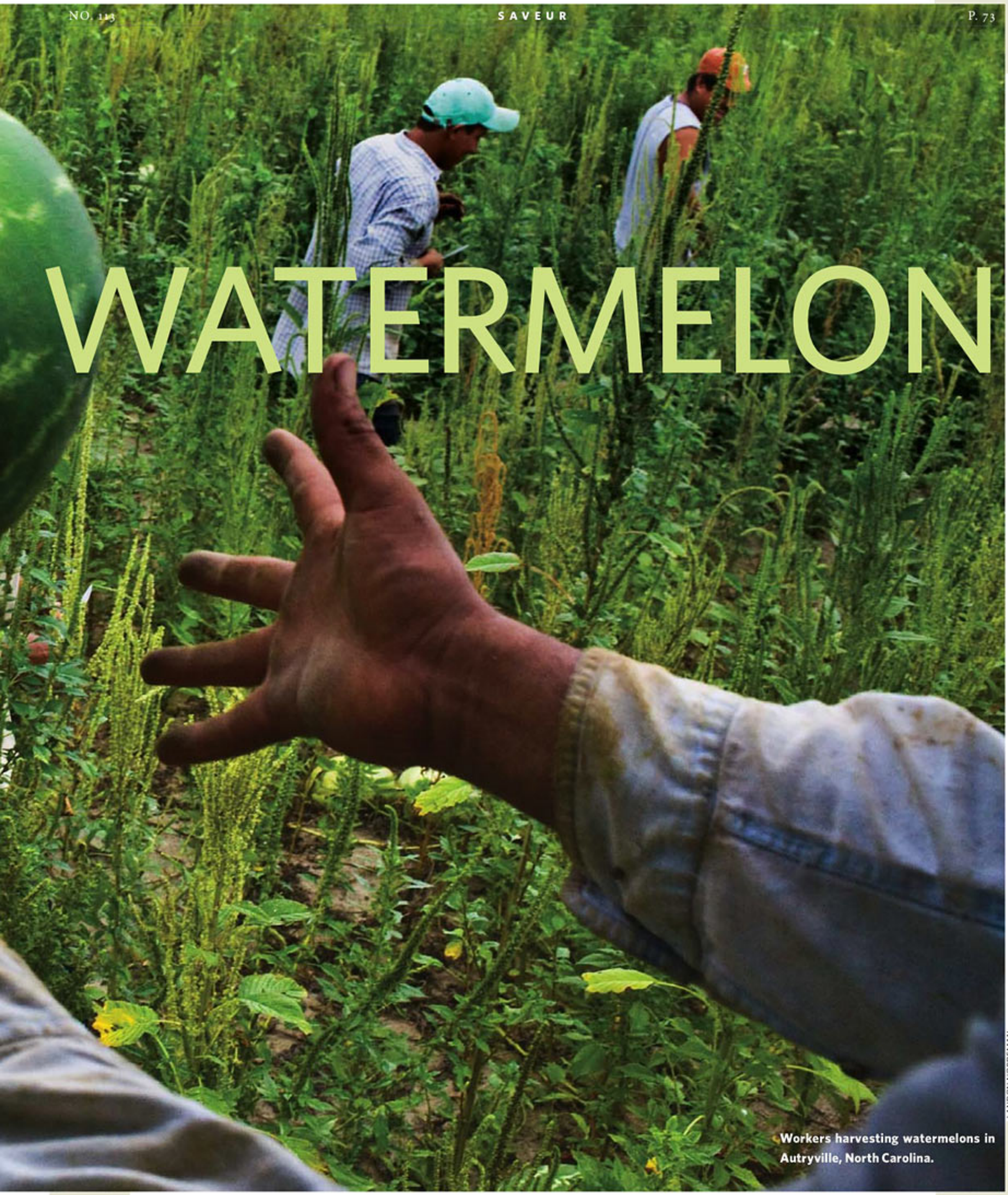
Author Day-Lewis adds whole raspberries to this sorbet (left) at the last moment of churning to create a chunky texture. In a 2-quart saucepan, bring 2 cups water and 1½ cups sugar to a boil, stirring to dissolve. Reduce heat to low and simmer, without stirring, to make a syrup, for 5 minutes. Pour the syrup into a medium bowl, stir in 1 tsp. vanilla extract, and transfer to the freezer to let chill for 15 minutes. Purée 1 lb. fresh raspberries (about 4 cups) with the syrup in a blender or food processor until smooth. Scrape the purée through a fine sieve into a bowl; discard the seeds. Stir 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice into the raspberry purée and pour it into a 2-quart ice cream maker (see page 107). Freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions until almost set but still a little slushy, about 25 minutes. Add 4 oz. fresh raspberries (about 1 cup) and continue freezing in the ice cream maker for about 5 minutes. Transfer the sorbet to a plastic container and freeze until completely set, about 1 hour. Makes about 5 cups.

WHY WE LOVE

IN ALL ITS JUICY, COLORFUL GUISES, THIS SUMMER FRUIT OFFERS A WORLD OF REFRESHMENT

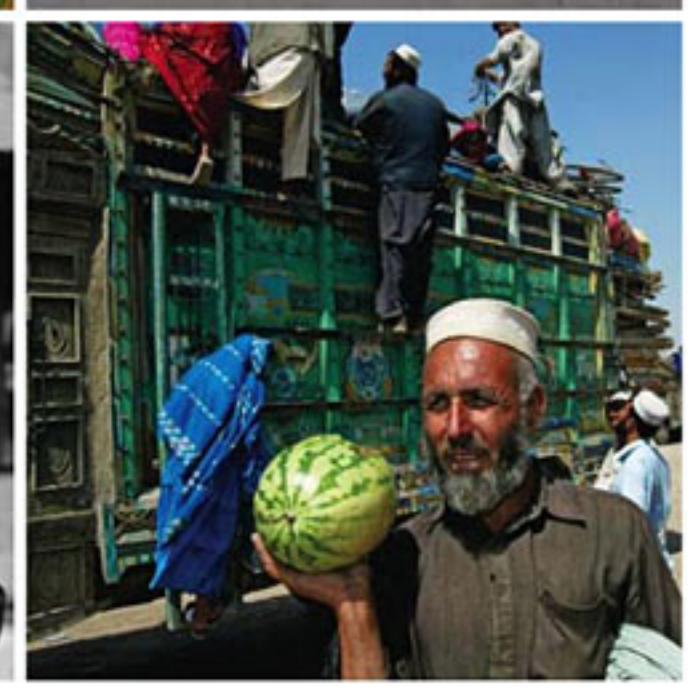
BY DANA BOWEN

WATERMELON



Workers harvesting watermelons in Autryville, North Carolina.

LANDON NORDEMAN



WATERMELON IS A SYMBOL FOR ALL THINGS SUMMER, A FOOD THAT SEEMS MAGICALLY TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE Farmers Market, off Interstate 40 in Raleigh, isn't what comes to mind when most people think of farmers' markets these days. There are no cooking demonstrations, no tables where customers can pick up their community-supported-agriculture boxes, no honor-system Radio Flyer red wagons for carting around children and produce. But when I was there at dawn one Friday morning last summer, there were more watermelons, of all sizes and shapes and stripes, than I had ever seen in my life.

In an open-air warehouse, workers maneuvered pallets of the fruit onto tractor-trailers destined for produce distributors up and down the East Coast. In a parking lot, huge cardboard boxes of both mini and mammoth melons were being bought and sold over handshakes between farmers and wholesale shoppers. Everywhere I looked, I saw flashes of crimson, pink, and yellow: the flesh of melons that had been slashed open so that potential buyers could take a taste with plastic spoons. Later that morning, when more farmers arrived to set up retail booths, watermelon names were scrawled on paper signs—sugar babies, jubilees, crimson sweets, seedless, and so on. Sure, plenty of other high-summer produce like peaches and plums was there for the taking, but watermelon was what everyone wanted, especially at $3 a pop, or two for $5. Some shoppers were balancing the fruit on their shoulders; others were eating slices of it and spitting the seeds on the pavement as they walked around in the sweltering heat.

I'd come to the market in Raleigh because I'm crazy about watermelon—the taste of it, the simplicity of it, the amazing capacity it has to refresh and restore during summer's hottest moments. When the fruit is in season, I always keep at least a quarter of a watermelon in the coolest part of my fridge; sometimes I sprinkle it with salt, a habit I picked up from my Sicilian grandmother, and other times I douse it with lemon juice or just eat it on its own. I go through phases when I crave it as I do no other food, and over the years my love for it has led me to seek out lots of different varieties—yellow-fleshed ones that taste of honey and spice, say, or pink ones with a muted sweetness. And in recent years, learning about the myriad ways that cooks in other cultures use watermelon has made me think about the fruit in an entirely new light, whether it's the garlicky, dill-strewn pickled watermelon slices that I've seen being sold from buckets by Russian immigrants in New York City's Brighton Beach neighborhood, not far from where I live, or the roasted watermelon seeds I tasted at a Vietnamese New Year's celebration at a friend's house.

Still, I'll always owe my fondness for watermelons to North Carolina, where I spent my teenage years and much of my 20s. Although that state doesn't devote as much land to growing the fruit as do the country's largest producers, Texas (with 40,000 acres) and Florida (32,000), it lays claim to a fervent watermelon culture. Few other states host as many watermelon festivals, crown as many watermelon queens, and throw as many watermelon socials. I'll

Above, clockwise from top left: shopping at the State Farmers Market in Raleigh, North Carolina; a watermelon vendor in Istanbul; a laborer in Peshawar, Pakistan; enjoying a plain slice in Yunnan Province, China.

RECIPE

Watermelon, Feta, and Olive Salad

SERVES 4

In this summer salad (facing page), watermelon is a sweet counterpoint to the briny pungency of feta and olives.

- **3 cups loosely packed arugula**
- **1 cup loosely packed flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- **1 cup loosely packed torn mint leaves**
- **1 2-lb. piece seedless watermelon, rind removed, cut into 1" cubes**
- **20 kalamata olives, smashed, pitted, and halved**
- **1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and julienned**
- **¼ small red onion, thinly sliced and soaked in ice water for 30 minutes**
- **4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled (about ¼ cup)**
- **2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 limes, halved**
- **Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

1. In a large bowl, toss together the arugula, parsley, and mint. Divide greens between 4 serving bowls or plates.

2. In a medium bowl, toss together watermelon, olives, jalapeño, and onion. Spoon the watermelon mixture, with its juice, evenly over the greens. Sprinkle each salad with some of the feta and drizzle with olive oil. Squeeze 1 lime half over the top of each salad and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; CRAIG LOVELL/EAGLE VISIONS PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; PICTURE CONTACT/ALAMY; TRAVEL INK/ALAMY; FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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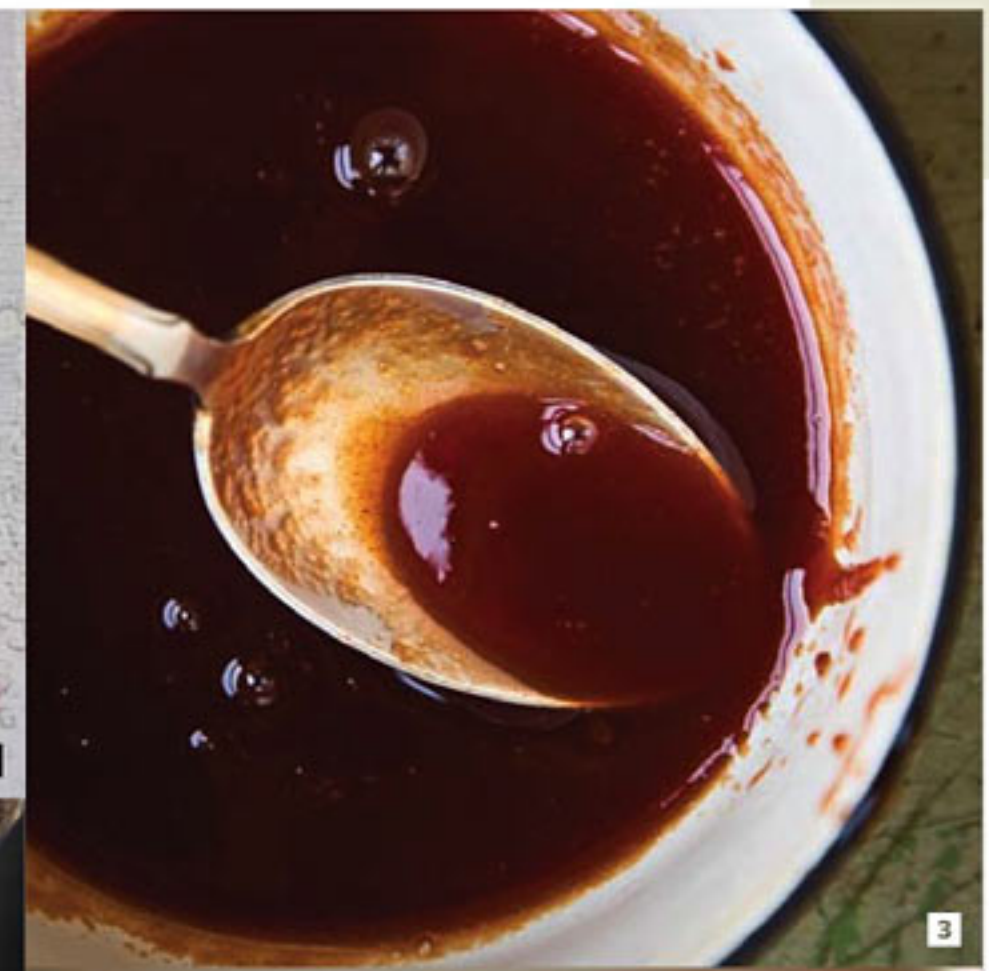

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never forget my introduction to that last ritual: it was my first week of high school, sometime in August, and the principal, a stoic man with a slow drawl, announced over the P.A. that students were to meet in the parking lot to eat some of the watermelon his family had harvested from their farm. There were groans at the idea of school-sanctioned fun, but once we got outside and found our buttoned-up principal in plain clothes, hacking watermelons with a machete on the bed of his red pickup truck, we instantly reverted to being kids. Since then, I've been reminded time and again that there's more to watermelon than its taste. Watermelon is a symbol for all things summer, and a magical sort of social glue, at that.

I had never thought much about seeking out different varieties of watermelon until I realized a while back that I was having a hard time finding the kind I grew up eating; they were oblong, pale skinned, sweet, and pocked with lots of large, black seeds. Years ago, at a farm stand in Carrboro, North Carolina, I bought one from a vendor who called it a charleston gray. So, on the morning of the state market in Raleigh, I walked up to a group of old-timers selling melons and asked where I could get one. They all shook their heads. "You rarely see charleston grays anymore," said Odis Johnson, a farmer from Benson, in the central part of the state. "But that sure was a good melon. Sweet as a mother's love."

WATERMELON BELONGS TO a large family of climbing vines that includes cucumbers, gourds, and other types of melon. The fruit, *Citrullus lanatus*, flourishes in warm and temperate climates across the world, and, because of watermelon's extensive root system, even arid regions can produce fruits that contain as much as 90 percent water, making watermelon a valuable source of hydration in places where water is scarce. Watermelon is believed to be native to Africa, where wild varieties have been consumed for thousands of years. Upon encountering them in the Kalahari Desert, the explorer David Livingstone wrote in 1857, "In years when more than the usual quantity of rain falls, vast tracts of the country are literally covered with these melons . . . some are sweet, and others so bitter that [they] are named by the Boers the 'bitter watermelon'." The bitter fruit to which Livingstone referred was actually citron, a cousin of the watermelon. It has pale yellow flesh that is tough and bland when raw but squashlike and succulent when cooked.

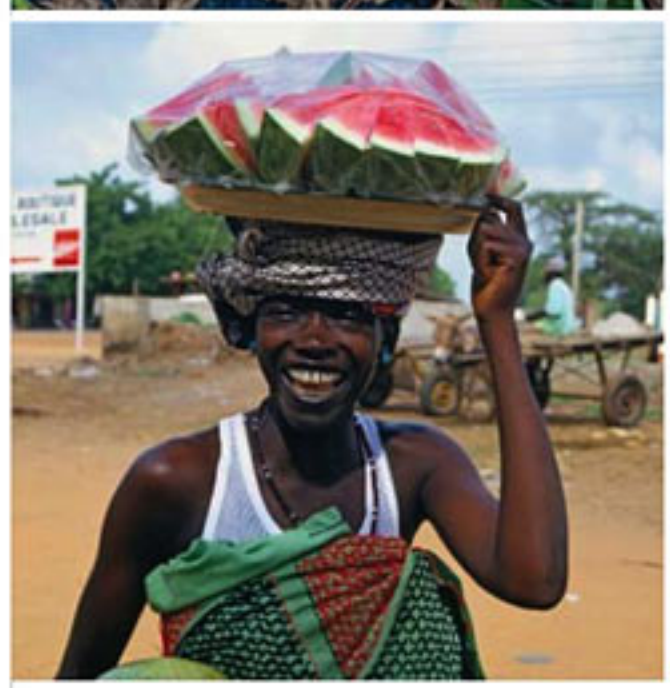
There's proof that watermelons were cultivated in Egypt as early as 2000 B.C. The fruit is believed to have traveled to India around A.D. 800 and to China roughly 300 years

Watermelon at an American picnic, circa 1900, above.

ABOVE: VINTAGE VISIONS/ALAMY; FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (9)

PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS

An unadorned slice of watermelon may rate as a perfect refreshment the world over, but this versatile melon also lends itself to a surprising number of delicious pairings and prepared dishes, both fresh and cooked. Traditional Thai and Indian culinary repertoires, for example, include a range of curries that unite cooked watermelon with pungent spices. In Mexico, it's common to find slices sprinkled with a tangy lime-chile salt called tajín 2, which boosts the intensity of the fruit's sweetness. In Italy and, increasingly, the United States, chefs drizzle aged balsamic vinegar 7 over watermelon and serve it as a simple first course; others wrap chunks of the fruit in thin slices of prosciutto or country ham 5, in another take on the salty-sweet juxtaposition. Pickled watermelon rinds 8 emerged in various cuisines in eastern Europe. Centuries later, Mennonite émigrés from Ukraine, among others, brought pickled rinds to the States, along with another favorite: watermelon syrup 3; boiled down with a bit of sugar, the melon's juice becomes thick and lustrous, perfect for drizzling over pancakes or ice cream. Oil-rich watermelon seeds 4 are prized in many parts of the world: Nigerians ferment them to make a seasoning called ogiri, and throughout Asia and the Middle East they're hulled, toasted, and eaten as a snack. In India, as in parts of Africa, the seeds are dried and then ground into a flour for baking. Watermelon is also puréed and strained to make drinks, like Mexico's popular agua fresca de sandía 6, a cooling combination of watermelon, lime juice, sugar, and water. In the southern African nation of Namibia and in parts of the U.S., watermelon juice is fermented for making watermelon wine 1, and watermelon beer has become a cult favorite of some American craft brewers. And if you've ever been to a fraternity party at a U.S. college or university, you've probably witnessed the trick of poking holes into watermelon's flesh and filling it with booze 9 such as vodka or rum; as it happens, the tradition is a venerable one: in 1900, says SAVEUR contributor David Wondrich, a recipe for whole watermelon steeped in brandy appeared in the book *Cocktail Boothby's American Bartender* by William "Cocktail" Boothby. —*Kayu Lam*



METHOD

Watermelon and Tomato Salad

Chef Bill Smith of Crook's Corner, a restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, serves a version of this refreshing dish (at left, bottom right photo) during the late summer. Smith says he developed the salad after paying a visit to a few of his former cooks in Mexico, where he discovered a range of dishes that melded sweet, spicy, and sour flavors. Whisk 1/4 cup champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar, 3 tsp. sugar, 1 tsp. kosher salt, and 1/4 tsp. cayenne together in a small bowl. Quarter and thinly slice half a small red onion and toss it in the vinegar mixture. Set aside to let rest until the onion softens and mellows, about 30 minutes. Remove the rind from a 4-lb. piece of seedless watermelon, cut into 1" chunks, and transfer to a large bowl. Cut 4 stemmed and cored ripe beefsteak tomatoes (about 1 1/2 lbs.) into 1" chunks. Combine the tomatoes with the watermelon chunks. Pour in the onion-vinegar mixture along with 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil and toss gently with your hands. Add 1 loosely packed cup roughly torn basil leaves and 1 loosely packed cup roughly torn mint leaves and toss gently. Season the watermelon and tomato salad with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste. Serve salad at room temperature on its own or alongside grilled fish or meat. Serves 4–6.

later. In India it quickly proliferated; although some Hindus shunned red-fleshed varieties because they resembled the meat of a cow, a sacred animal, cooks in northern India incorporated watermelon into salads and even curries. In many parts of India, the pulp of watermelon is churned into a sharbat, a type of sweet, slushy drink. In Turkey (which consumes more watermelon than any other country in the world), a similar refreshment, called şerbeti, is popular. The Moors brought the fruit to Spain as early as the eighth century, and it soon spread across the European continent.

Most scholars agree that watermelon seeds were first brought to North America aboard slave ships, and records show that farmers began growing watermelon in the colonies as early as 1629. Though the fruit was quickly embraced by Americans, for several centuries it was considered more an African food, like okra, than an American one. This notion, in part, laid the groundwork for the racial stereotypes the fruit would later come to represent, says Frederick Douglass Opie, the author of the new book *Hog & Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America* (Columbia University Press, 2008). "Though both whites and blacks would eat watermelon at the earliest July Fourth celebrations," he says, "at the start of Jim Crow it was used as a way of ridiculing African Americans and seen as something undignified."

In early American cookbooks (and many contemporary ones, for that matter), the only recipe one tends to find for the fruit is for watermelon rind pickles, a traditional Southern preparation. That is hardly surprising, considering that watermelon is such a refreshing *(continued on page 82)*

AN ANCIENT ART

Mention watermelon carving to most people in this country, and they'll probably think of a hollowed-out, melon ball–filled watermelon "basket". In Thailand, however, the elaborate carving of watermelon and other fruits and vegetables is a long-standing and respected tradition that dates to the 14th century, when the art evolved in the court of King Phra Ruang. Chefs for Thai nobility and royalty were expected to make food that was not only delicious but also beautiful, even fantastical. Today in Thailand, carved fruits and vegetables are presented as religious offerings, used as displays at weddings and banquets, and entered into judged competitions. Kalaya Tongchareon Paragas, a 55-year-old Thai immigrant who lives in Long Island, New York, has been carving vegetables and watermelons—like the many-petaled one shown on the facing page—since she was in her teens as a way of continuing and honoring the traditions of her native land. Though she learned the basics of carving in middle school using pieces of ginger, Paragas has recently taught herself more-complicated techniques by reading books on the subject and swapping advice with friends. Today, she teaches carving classes and creates elaborate centerpieces for events at her local Buddhist temple. When asked what her next masterpiece would be, Paragas laughed and said, "My 15-year-old son wants me to make a Pokemon." —*Katherine Cancila*

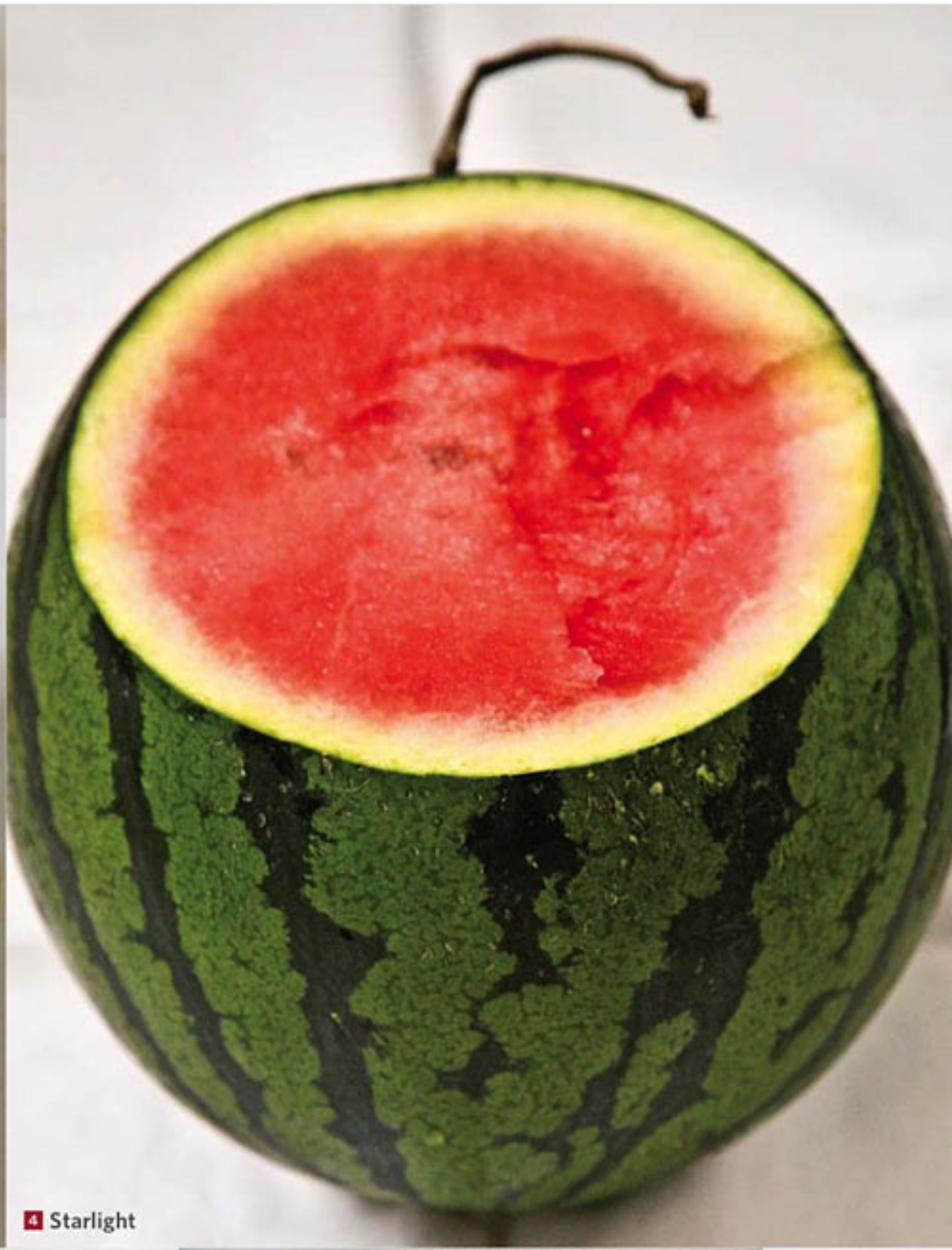
Above, clockwise from top left: a seeded variety called celebration; on the way to market in China; watermelon and tomato salad; sliced melon for sale in the Gambia, West Africa. Facing page, a Thai-style watermelon carving.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; VIEW STOCK/ALAMY; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; ROBERT HARDING PICTURE LIBRARY LTD/ALAMY; FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI.

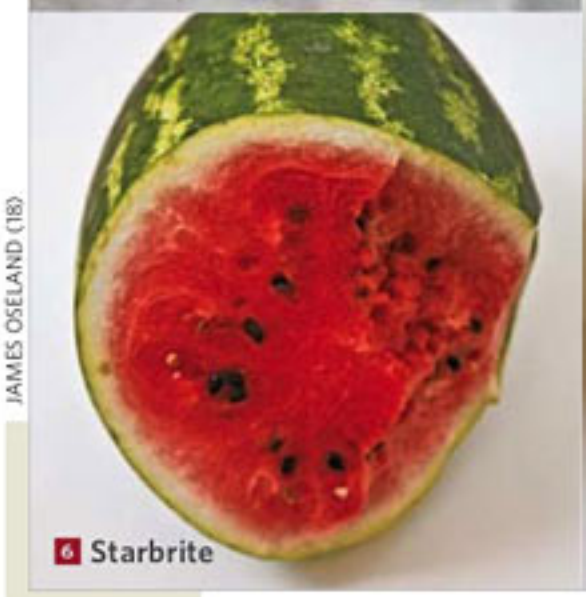
1 Sugar Baby

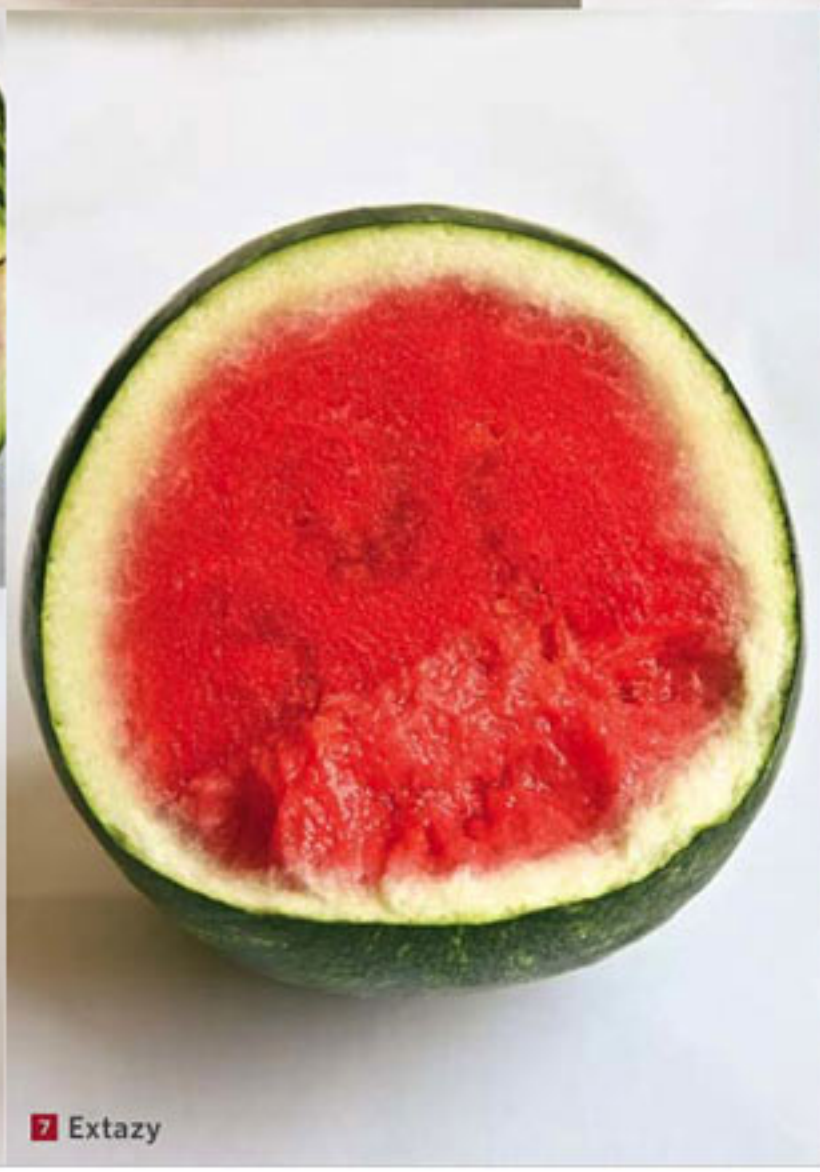
2 Sangria

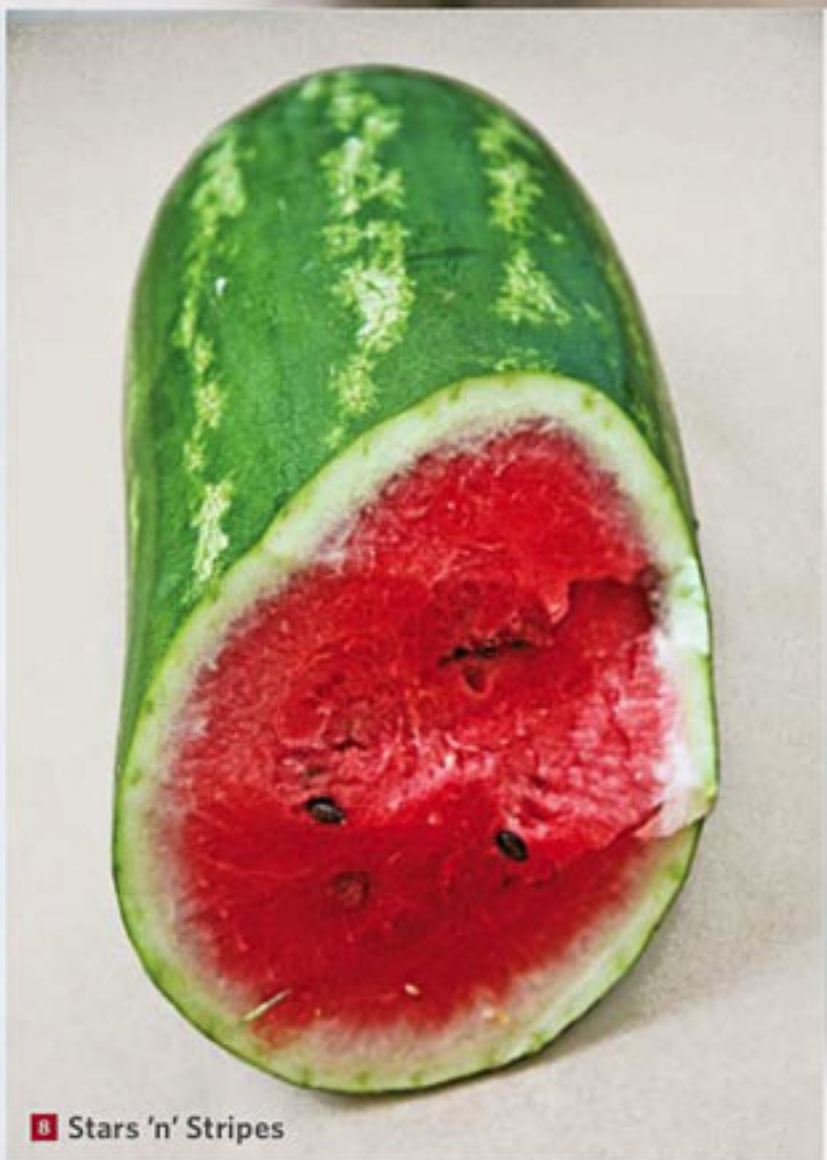
3 Golden Midget


4 Starlight

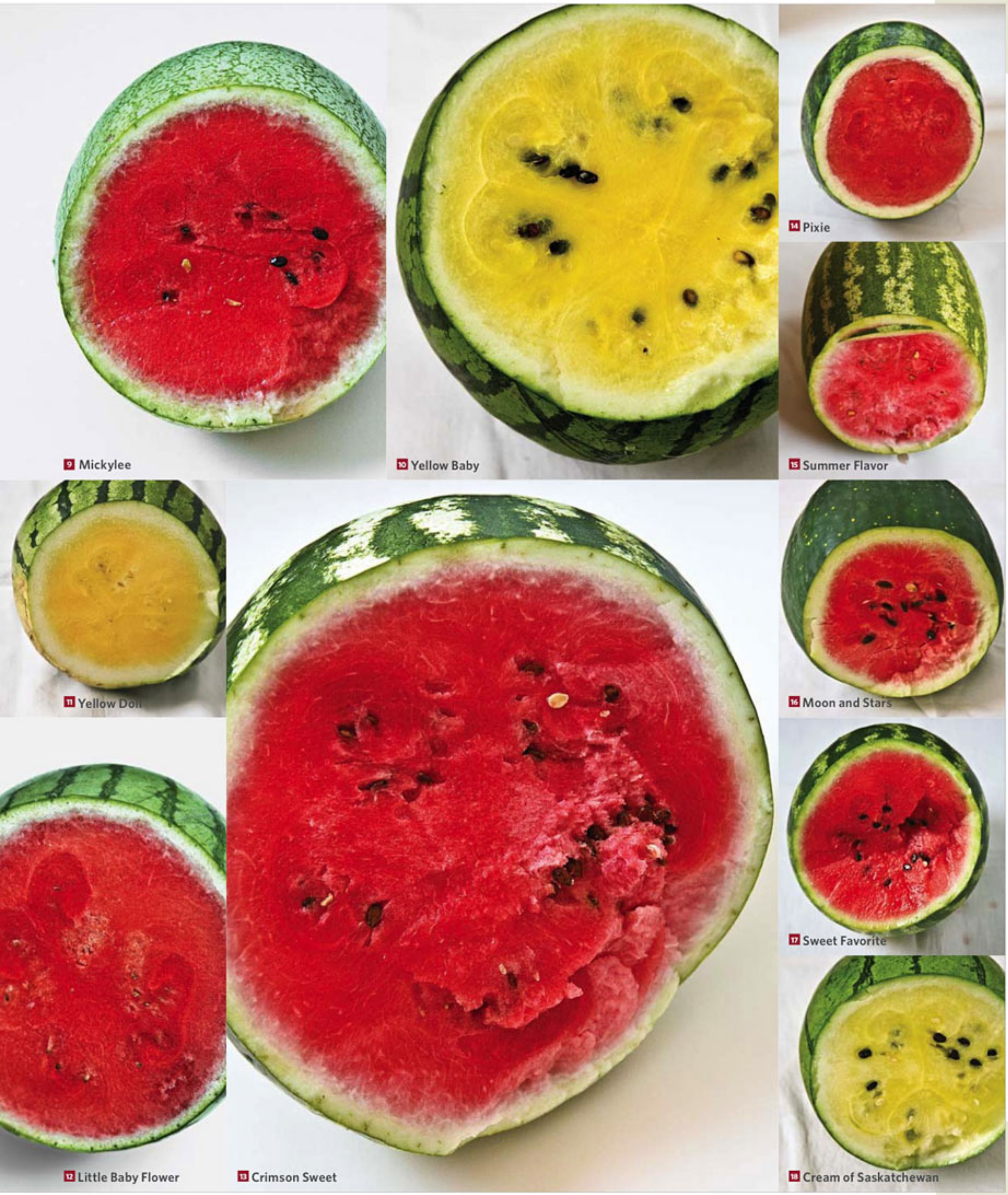
5 Jubilee


6 Starbrite


7 Extazy


8 Stars 'n' Stripes

JAMES OSELAND (18)


9 Mickylee
10 Yellow Baby
14 Pixie
15 Summer Flavor
11 Yellow Doll
16 Moon and Stars
17 Sweet Favorite
12 Little Baby Flower
13 Crimson Sweet
18 Cream of Saskatchewan

(continued from page 78) treat on its own. In his 1894 novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Mark Twain sang watermelon's praises: "The true southern watermelon is a boon apart, and not to be mentioned with commoner things . . . . When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat."

It is only in recent times, as more restaurants featuring cuisines from around the world have opened, that Americans have become acquainted with how the rest of the world eats the fruit: be it in a salad with a salty counterpoint, like olives or feta, or puréed and used in desserts like a gelo di melone, a panna cotta–like Sicilian specialty topped with whipped cream and chopped pistachios. In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at the legendary restaurant Crook's Corner, chef Bill Smith turns an otherwise traditional summer tomato-and-herb salad into something else entirely with the addition of watermelon; the tomatoes' acidity both accentuates and moderates the sweetness of the fruit. In New York, at the restaurant Fatty Crab, Zak Pelaccio pairs a watermelon pickle with crisp pork belly, a riff on a Chinese-Malaysian theme. And in Atlanta, Anne Quatrano, the chef-owner of Bacchanalia and the Floataway Café, makes risotto tossed with preserved watermelon rinds and also wraps watermelon in slices of country ham. (Read about more favorite watermelon pairings and dishes in "Plays Well with Others", page 77.)

Quatrano is such a fan of watermelon, in fact, that she's started growing her own. Like many of today's watermelon enthusiasts, she has a passion for heirloom varieties: she raises blacktail mountain, cream of saskatchewan, and others. (See "Variety on the Vine", at left, to learn about other watermelon cultivars.) "I love how different these old varieties taste, how subtle tasting some of them are," she told me, adding that she found the seeds through a nonprofit organization called the Seed Savers Exchange, which is dedicated to rescuing and sharing heirloom seeds. Amy Goldman, an heirloom grower in upstate New York and the author of the book *Melons* (Artisan, 2002),

A slide show of Thai watermelon-carving techniques at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE113

VARIETY ON THE VINE

In this country, hundreds of watermelon cultivars have been developed by farmers and horticulturists over the years; they vary widely in taste, texture, and color. Here are 18 of our favorites (displayed on the previous two pages; see THE PANTRY, page 107, for sources.) 1 Sugar Baby The comparatively small (nine to 13 pounds) sugar baby is often referred to as an icebox watermelon. Developed in 1955, it has soft, sweet fruit and a dark green rind. **2 Sangria** Developed in 1985, this supersize variety is beloved for its scarlet-colored, nonfibrous flesh. The melon's popularity has diminished recently owing to a demand for smaller varieties. **3 Golden Midget** The rind of the stunning golden midget, a mini weighing only three pounds, turns yellow when ripe. Elwyn Meader and Albert Yeager, well-known breeders at the University of New Hampshire, developed the variety in 1959. **4 Starlight** The pristine, amaranth-colored fruit of this mini cultivar glistens with juice. It's easily transportable—and deeply satisfying. **5 Jubilee** Developed in 1963, this popular, supersweet cultivar may weigh up to 45 pounds, so it ranks as a giant, a classification conferred on watermelons exceeding 32 pounds at full ripeness. **6 Starbrite** The bright pink, medium-firm flesh of this variety, a descendant of the charleston gray and the crimson sweet, is perfect for puréeing into granitas or sorbets. **7 Extazy** The pint-size extazy is a seedless melon that averages five pounds and is grown mostly in California and Arizona. **8 Stars 'n' Stripes** This hybrid, named for the green stripes streaking across its rind, has an elongated shape and can weigh as much as 30 pounds; it is well loved for its firm, sweet, deeply colored flesh. **9 Mickylee** A lovely, speckled rind and dense red flesh characterize this 22-year-old seedless variety, which averages 12 pounds. **10 Yellow Baby** This hybrid is similar to yellow doll (below) in its rind pattern and the color of its flesh; try the tender fruit in a salsa made with jalapeño and tomatillo. **11 Yellow Doll** Weighing no more than eight pounds, this extra-sweet, golden-fleshed mini has especially soft fruit, which makes it an excellent ingredient for smoothies and iced cocktails. **12 Little Baby Flower** This petite, pink-fleshed cultivar ripens quickly and never exceeds four pounds. **13 Crimson Sweet** The amply proportioned crimson sweet is famous for its sugary, bright red flesh; it is a cross of the charleston gray, miles, and peacock varieties and has a honeyed taste that pleasantly offsets feta and mint. **14 Pixie** This miniature, seedless melon averages only six pounds and has thick stripes along its rind; the succulent pixie is part of a breeding trend that favors very sweet, seedless fruit. **15 Summer Flavor** Numerous subcultivars of this popular variety now exist. Summer flavor #420, pictured, is a cross between a crimson sweet and an allsweet. **16 Moon and Stars** Studded with a constellation of lemon-colored dots, this heirloom variety, which can weigh as much as 40 pounds, nearly disappeared only a few years after it was introduced, in the 1920s, but has recently made a comeback. **17 Sweet Favorite** Dappled with light green patches on a blue-green rind, the sweet favorite has juicy, ruby-colored fruit that's well suited to relishes and chutneys. **18 Cream of Saskatchewan** This rare, creamy-fleshed melon usually weighs about ten pounds. The cultivar is said to have been brought to North America by Russian immigrants who settled in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. —*K.C.***

RECIPE

Solyoniy Arbuz

(Russian Pickled Watermelon)

SERVES 6

The recipe for these savory pickles (facing page) is based on one that appears in *Pickled: Preserving a World of Tastes and Traditions* by Lucy Norris (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2003); it was contributed by Sophia Vinokurau, the owner of M & I International Foods in Brooklyn, New York.

- 1/4 cup kosher salt
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. pickling spices (see page 107)
- 3/4 tsp. cayenne
- 1/2 tsp. distilled white vinegar
- 8 cloves peeled garlic, smashed
- 5 ribs celery, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 bunch dill, roots trimmed
- 1 2-lb. piece watermelon, rind left on, cut into 1"-thick wedges

In a large nonreactive bowl or pot, stir together salt, sugar, pickling spices, cayenne, vinegar, garlic, celery, dill, and 8 cups water until salt and sugar dissolve. Submerge the watermelon wedges. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 week and up to 2 weeks before serving.

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

RECIPE

Tarbooz ki Subzi

(Watermelon Curry)

SERVES 6

A specialty of the Indian state of Rajasthan, this delicious curry (left) plays the sweet, juicy flesh of the watermelon against a complex background of chiles and spices. For a thicker curry, remove half of the cooked watermelon pieces, blend them to a pulpy consistency, and stir them back into the curry. This recipe is based on one that appears in *660 Curries* by Raghavan Iyer (Workman, 2008).

- **1 3-lb. piece seedless watermelon, rind left on**
- **2 tbsp. canola oil**
- **½ tsp. ajwain (see page 107)**
- **½ tsp. cumin seeds**
- **½ tsp. nigella seeds (black onion seeds; see page 107)**
- **2 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed**
- **4 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **1 tsp. kosher salt**
- **¼ tsp. turmeric**
- **2 tsp. chopped fresh cilantro, to garnish**
- **Steamed basmati rice**

1. Trim and discard the thin, dark green skin of the watermelon rind with a knife, leaving the inner, whitish-green rind intact. Separate the rind from the red flesh with the knife and cut both rind and flesh into 1" pieces. Set aside in separate bowls.

2. In a 2-quart saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add ajwain, cumin, nigella seeds, and chiles and cook, swirling the pan, until spices are toasted and fragrant, 2–3 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until golden brown, about 30 seconds. Add watermelon rind, salt, and turmeric and cook, stirring occasionally, until rind is lightly browned and liquid has almost evaporated, about 7 minutes.

3. Pour 1 cup water into pan, cover, and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer curry, stirring occasionally, until the rind pieces are tender, about 10 minutes. Uncover saucepan, add the red flesh, and stir to combine. Raise the heat to medium-high and boil, stirring occasionally, until the flesh softens slightly and the flavors come together, about 5 minutes. Transfer curry to a serving platter and sprinkle with the cilantro. Serve with rice.

NOTHING COMPARES TO THIS FRUIT—THE TASTE OF IT, THE AMAZING CAPACITY IT HAS TO REFRESH AND RESTORE

credits a founder of that group, Kent Whealy, with saving moon and stars, a juicy variety with a dark green rind speckled with golden dots. Created in 1926, that heirloom variety had all but disappeared, but now that people like Whealy, Goldman, and Quatrano are preserving seeds and cultivating the melons, they are easy to find again.

While some people are working hard to save the seeds of old melon varieties, seed companies are pouring energy into the development of others with patented names like Tri-X313 and Super Seedless 7167. Jonathan Schultheis, an agricultural-extension specialist and professor in the Horticulture Science Department at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, is one of the leaders in the field of melon science. He explained to me that most of the varieties grown today in the United States are hybrids that have been bred for longer shelf life, disease resistance, durability, and sweetness.

This kind of cross-breeding, Schultheis said, is nothing new; hybridized varieties have been around since the late

WHERE SIZE MATTERS

For some gardeners and farmers, big is never big enough. That seems to hold especially true in Hope, Arkansas, the self-proclaimed Giant Watermelon Capital of the World. In 1917, a local store owner began offering cash prizes for the largest fruits and vegetables that locals could haul from their fields or gardens. In 1925, two brothers, Hugh and Edgar Laseter, established the first watermelon dynasty in Hope, setting the bar high with a 136-pound melon; they went on to take first prize in the watermelon category two more times. Today, the Hope Watermelon Festival is a four-day affair held every August. Aside from the watermelon judging, events include seed-spitting competitions and a watermelon-eating contest. The current record—a Guinness World Record, to be precise—stands at 268.8 pounds, for a specimen submitted by a retired school administrator named Lloyd Bright (whose father, also a melon grower, and son are pictured at left) in 2005. —*Caitlin Drexler*

FROM TOP: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; COURTESY LLOYD BRIGHT

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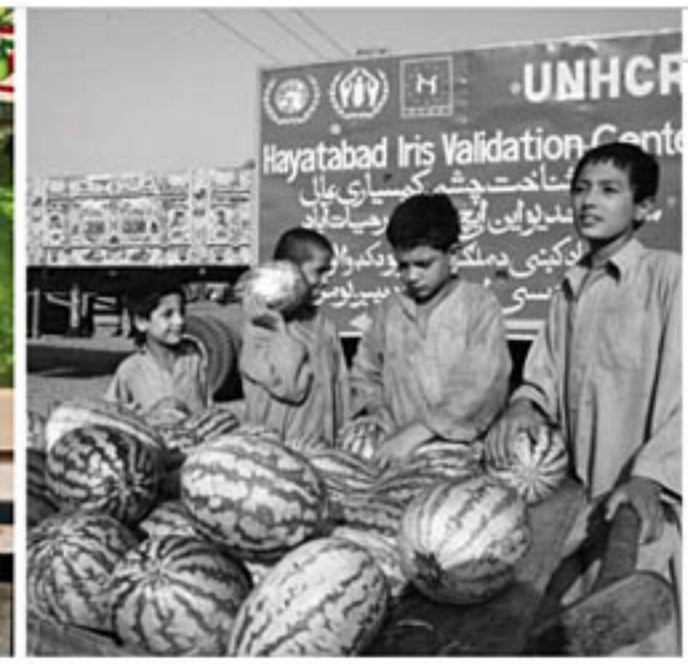

"THE TRUE SOUTHERN WATERMELON IS. . .NOT TO BE MENTIONED WITH COMMONER THINGS," WROTE MARK TWAIN

Clockwise from top left: melons for sale in Raleigh, North Carolina; more on display in Peshawar, Pakistan; Sicilian watermelon pudding; Juan Telles, a worker on Brent Jackson's farm in Autryville, North Carolina.

1930s. Even my beloved charleston gray was born in a horticulture lab. It was invented in 1954 by one Charles Frederic Andrus, who worked at the USDA Vegetable Breeding Laboratory in Charleston, South Carolina. Though it's hard to find now, that melon was heralded as a commercial breakthrough because its elongated shape and thick rind allowed it to be shipped safely without its cracking. Indeed, charleston grays, I found out, dominated the East Coast market for close to 30 years, and now many hybrids—the pink-fleshed starbrite, for example—have some charleston gray in their genes. Schultheis was pessimistic about my chances of finding any charleston grays. Still, he said, if anyone were to have them, it would be Brent Jackson, one of North Carolina's most productive watermelon farmers, who has more than a thousand acres of the fruit planted around the town of Autryville, about an hour south of Raleigh. I decided to pay him a visit.

During peak season, the Jackson Farming Company operates out of a mobile home that sits in front of a million-dollar refrigerated warehouse where thousands upon thousands of pounds of watermelons await shipping around the world. The building is flanked by a fleet of old school buses whose windows and seats have been removed so that the vehicles can be used for storing watermelons during harvesting. Jackson shook his head when I mentioned the charleston gray. "When we started, in 1978, that's what we grew: charleston grays, jubilees, and crimson sweets," he said. "That was all that was available, but over the years, watermelons have done like TVs; they've gotten smarter and smarter and smarter." And smaller. Jackson recalled that his watermelons used to weigh 30 to 40 pounds, compared with the so-called icebox varieties—four- to eight-pounders—that he mostly sells today.

We got into Jackson's truck and drove past mile after mile of watermelon patches and tobacco fields. After a while, we pulled over alongside a field that was studded with green orbs: melons almost ready for harvest. Off in the distance, I spotted a car speeding off. "Probably a thief," Jackson said, as we walked out into the field. Then he crouched down over a large, oblong watermelon, took a knife from his pocket, and shoved the tip of it into the rind. The entire watermelon snapped open with a forceful thump, as if it were releasing a season's worth of pent-up energy. The flesh was shockingly scarlet. He carved out a piece and handed it to me to taste.

"It's a hybrid called celebration," he said. It wasn't the charleston gray I'd been hoping to find, but it sure was delicious—bursting with juice and flavor. And besides, there was still a good chunk of summer left for me to continue my search.

RECIPE

Gelo di Melone

(Sicilian Watermelon Pudding)

SERVES 6

The recipe for this dish (at left, bottom right photo), popular in the Sicilian capital, Palermo, is based on one in *Great Italian Desserts* (Little, Brown, 1990), by Nick Malgieri.

- **1 3-lb. piece seedless watermelon, rind removed, cut into 1" chunks**
- **2/3 cup sugar**
- **1/2 cup cornstarch**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **Whipped cream, to garnish**
- **Roughly chopped pistachios, to garnish**
- **Diced candied citron, to garnish (see page 107), optional**
- **Grated semisweet chocolate, to garnish**
- **Ground cinnamon, to garnish**

1. Purée the watermelon chunks in a blender or food processor until liquefied. Set aside.

2. Whisk together sugar and cornstarch in a 3-quart nonreactive saucepan. While whisking, drizzle in puréed watermelon. Bring the watermelon mixture to a boil over medium heat, while stirring constantly and scraping bottom with a wooden spoon. Boil, stirring constantly to prevent scorching, until it thickens slightly, about 5 minutes.

3. Remove the saucepan from the heat and whisk in the vanilla. Using a rubber spatula, push and scrape the watermelon mixture through a fine sieve into a 2-quart bowl. Cover bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate until set, about 4 hours. To serve, spoon the pudding between 6 small serving bowls and garnish with whipped cream, pistachios, citron (if using), and chocolate. Dust with the cinnamon.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; PICTURE CONTACT/ALAMY; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; LANDON NORDEMAN

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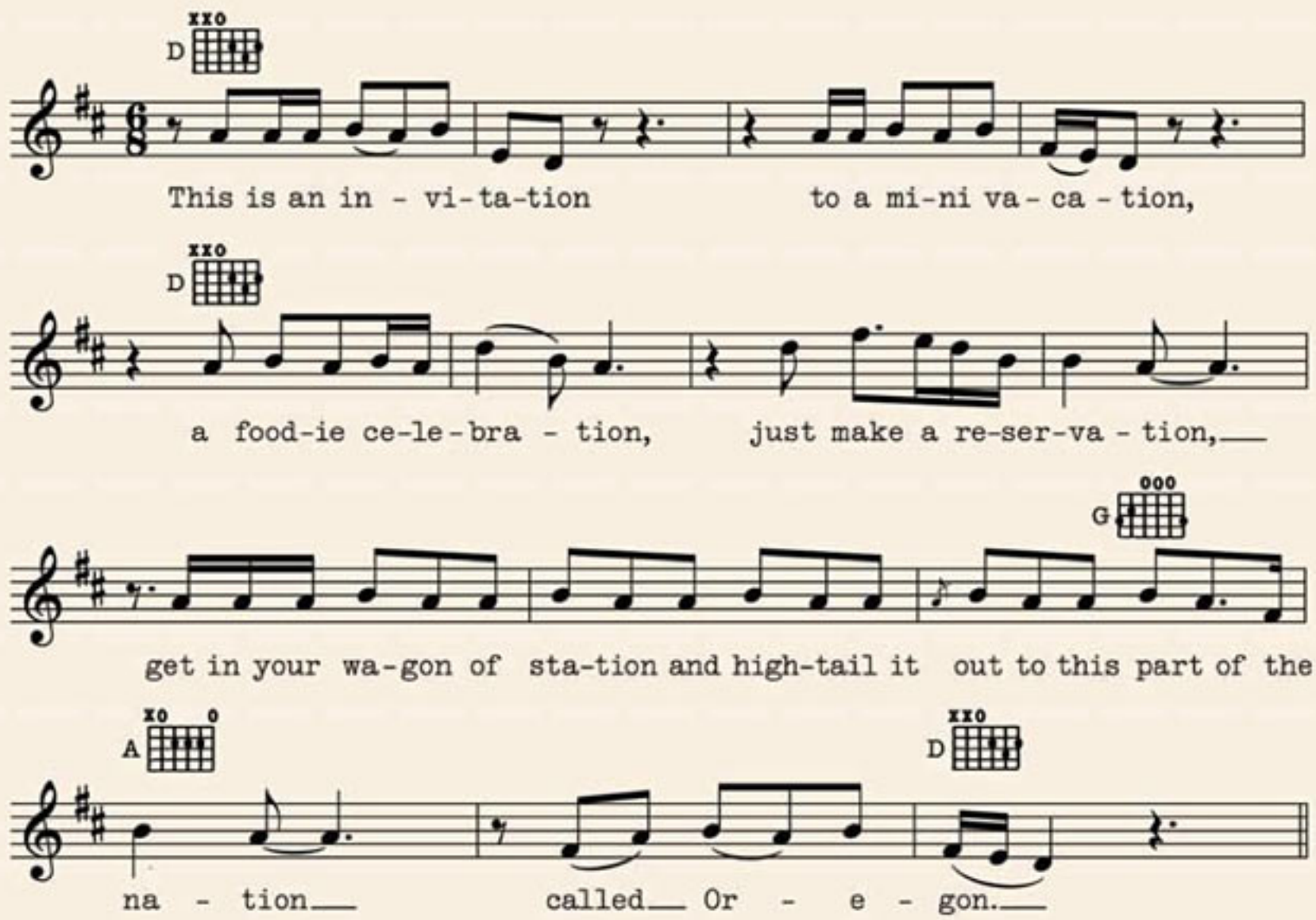

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Urban Harvest

A New Yorker discovers that the age-old tradition of canning suits big-city life just fine

By Eugenia Bone Photographs by André Baranowski

WHENEVER I AM FEELING OVERWHELMED by the fast pace of life in New York City, I go into the pantry of my apartment, sit on the floor, open a cabinet, and poke about at the hundred or so jars of fruits and vegetables that I've put up over the course of the year. I pause over favorites—the pickled cauliflower and onion, the fat bing cherries preserved in merlot and orange peel, the yellow succotash made with lima beans—and think about all the wonderful meals I can make with them.

My interest in preserving was sparked the year John Lennon died. It was 1980, and I was a sophomore at Barnard College and lived in a ratty little railroad apartment above Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant on MacDougal Street, in Greenwich Village. Probably as an act of charity (I was surviving on peanut butter and, not surprisingly, falafel), a friend of my parents', the then *Gourmet* magazine restaurant critic Jay Jacobs, used to take me to lunch when he was reviewing. One Sunday Jay deigned to invite me to brunch at his Upper East Side apartment. There were all kinds of sophisticates there, and me, a gawky 21-year-old in a vinyl miniskirt. I was dazzled, not by the muckety-mucks who sipped corton-charlemagne and traded stock tips but by the buffet. There were soft, luscious scrambled eggs, golden brioches as puffy as cumulus clouds, and a curling pile of thinly sliced gravlax, orangey pink and opalescent, that was utterly light and creamy. I was smitten. Jay told me he'd cured the gravlax a few days earlier and that it was so easy a monkey could make it, and he gave me the recipe. That such a marvelous dish could, in theory at least, be made in my apartment and stored in my wheezing old refrigerator seemed like a miracle to me. I went home and dreamed of cured fish, imagining my own brilliant brunches.

PEOPLE ALL OVER THE GLOBE have been preserving food for millennia, and one could make the argument that the art of doing so was a key to the advancement of civilizations. Foods like salted fish, dried meat, and pickled vegetables allowed ancient communities to migrate,

Rows of preserved fruit and vegetables in the author's pantry in Manhattan.

EUGENIA BONE *is the author of the forthcoming book* Urban Preservation *(Clarkson Potter). Her most recent article for* SAVEUR *was "Mountain Beauty" (August/September 2007).*

to explore, and to wage (or survive) war. Indeed, when a French confectioner named Nicolas Appert developed the process of preserving food in glass jars, in 1806, it was expressly to feed Napoleon Bonaparte's navy. Canning spread throughout Europe and the United States, where it quickly became popular with home cooks in both rural and urban areas.

Having grown up in an Italian-American household in Katonah, New York, I was already familiar with the idea of preserving food at home. My dad, the cook and artist Edward Giobbi, put up a wide variety of foods, from prosciutto in the winter to fava beans, pesto, and the must (leftover seeds, skins, juice, and stems) from pressed wine grapes in the summer. He even canned his own tuna. When I was a child, my family summered in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and toward the end of the season Dad would go to the docks pulling a child's red wagon and roll home a tremendous, 150-pound tuna that he'd bought off the pier and gutted on the spot. He would flop the big, silvery fish, fat as a barrel, into the only bathtub in the house, salt it, and run a trickle of cold water over it to extract the blood. For 24 hours the fish would lie in the tub, its eye staring up glassily at the showerhead. When the tuna was ready, Dad would clean off our large, marble-topped dinner table and

METHOD

Spaghettini con Sugo di Tonno

(Pasta with Tuna Sauce)

The secret to making this luscious pasta (pictured, facing page) is to stir in a little of the pasta cooking water, which melds with the tuna and the oil to create a creamy sauce. Bring a 6-quart pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add 12 oz. dried spaghettini and cook until it is just al dente, about 8 minutes. Ladle out and reserve 1/2 cup pasta water. Drain and reserve pasta. Meanwhile, heat 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add 6 cloves finely chopped garlic and 1 1/2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes and cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic softens, about 2 minutes. Increase heat to high. Add 2 half pints homemade canned tuna (see below) with their oil or three 6-oz. cans olive oil–packed tuna (undrained) and cook, stirring and breaking up tuna into small chunks with a wooden spoon, until heated through, about 2 minutes. Add reserved pasta and water and toss with tuna sauce. Cook, stirring vigorously with tongs, until sauce thickens and clings to pasta. Stir in 3 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves, season with kosher salt to taste, and drizzle with more oil. Divide the pasta between 4 bowls and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Homemade Canned Tuna

Home-canned, oil-packed tuna is sumptuous, flaky, and full of flavor—a world apart from most commercial versions. Tuna is a low-acid food, so it must be canned with a pressure canner, preferably of the weighted-gauge variety (see page 107 for more information). The pressure creates a higher-than-boiling temperature that kills any bacteria that may cause spoilage. Bring a 6-quart pot of water to a boil. Place 6 half-pint canning jars along with their bands and lids (see page 107) in the boiling water for 30 seconds. Using tongs, transfer the jars, bands, and lids to a kitchen towel on a counter and let air-dry. Wash 2 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless bluefin, yellowfin, or albacore tuna loin; trim off and discard the dark blood line and any connective tissue. **1** Cut tuna into 2 1/2" x 3" chunks. Pack the chunks of tuna into the jars, cutting them to fit as necessary, leaving 1" of space at the top. (Use any scraps of tuna to fill gaps along the sides of the jars.) Sprinkle 1/2 tsp. kosher salt into each jar and pour in enough olive oil to cover the tuna, leaving exactly 3/4" of space below each rim. **2** Using a table knife, pry the tuna away from the sides of the jars to allow oil to fill any air pockets. Wipe the rims clean with a hot damp towel, seal with the lids, and screw the bands on. **3** Put the rack in the bottom of a 10 1/2-quart pressure canner and place the sealed jars on top of it. Pour in enough boiling water to fill canner by 2" to 3". Lock the top of the pressure canner in place according to the manufacturer's instructions. Remove the pressure regulator cap or dial gauge from the steam vent and set it aside. Heat the canner over high heat, allowing steam to release from the vent for 10 minutes, in order to remove most of the air from the canner. Carefully cover the steam vent with the pressure regulator cap or dial gauge. When the pressure gauge reads 11 lbs., process the jars for 1 hour and 40 minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary to keep the pressure at 11 lbs. If the pressure dips below 11 lbs., stop timing, bring the canner back up to the correct pressure by increasing the heat, and resume timing. (When using this recipe at altitudes of 1,000 feet and higher, add 1 more minute of processing time per 1,000 feet of additional elevation.) Turn off the heat and allow the pressure to drop to zero, 30–45 minutes. Remove the pressure gauge. Wait for 2 minutes, then lift off the top of the canner, taking care to avoid any residual steam. **4** Using tongs or a rubber-handled jar lifter, transfer the jars to a kitchen towel on the counter and let cool for 12 hours. (If the jars are greasy, wipe them with a towel dipped in white vinegar.) Check the seals by removing the bands and lifting the jars by their lids. If the jars are properly sealed, the lids should hold tight. If the jar opens, refrigerate it right away and eat the tuna within 2 days. Otherwise, store canned tuna in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year. Refrigerate after opening. Makes 6 half pints.

Spaghettini tossed with a sauce of homemade canned tuna, garlic, and chopped parsley.

Home-Cured Bacon

Home curing is easy and yields a far more flavorful bacon than the store-bought kind. What's more, you can season the bacon any way you like; this recipe calls for a rub of fennel, caraway, rosemary, and thyme. At its simplest, bacon is made by curing a slab of pork belly with salt, which permeates the meat and draws the water from the muscle cells, depriving microbes of the moisture they need to survive. Contrary to popular belief, bacon doesn't have to be smoked, and pork curing doesn't require the use of nitrites, a common preservative found in store-bought cured meats, if the meat is cooked. For this home method, the bacon is slow-roasted after a seven-day cure and then refrigerated. **1** Trim a 2½-lb. slab of skin-on pork belly to square off its edges. Rinse the pork, pat it dry, and transfer it to large sheet of parchment paper. Measure out 2½ tbsp. kosher salt, 1½ tbsp. sugar, 1 tbsp. black peppercorns, 1 tsp. fennel seed, 1 tsp. caraway seed, 1 tsp. dried rosemary, 1 tsp. dried thyme, and 2 bay leaves and coarsely grind in a spice grinder. Set aside seasonings in a bowl. Finely chop 1 clove garlic; combine with spices. **2** Rub seasonings all over pork. **3** Transfer pork and any excess spices to a 1-gallon resealable plastic bag and seal, shaking the bag to distribute the seasonings. Refrigerate for 7 days on a sheet tray, flipping the bag every other day. (Some brine will accumulate in the bag as the salt draws water from the pork.) After 7 days, the bacon should feel firm to the touch. Remove bacon from the bag and thoroughly wash off the spices under cold running water. Pat bacon dry with paper towels. **4** Heat oven to 200°. Transfer bacon to a 9" x 13" baking pan and roast until meat is lightly browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center reads 150°, about 2 hours. Transfer bacon to a cutting board. With a long, thin knife, slice off the skin. Let bacon cool to room temperature. Pat bacon dry, wrap in wax paper, and refrigerate until completely chilled. Wrap bacon in plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 10 days or freeze for up to 3 months. Slice and fry up for the breakfast table or cut into lardons for a salad. Makes 2½ lbs.

Frisée salad with poached eggs and bacon.

butcher the fish. We would grill and eat the best part—the fatty belly—and my father would pack the rest into half-pint jars, which he'd top off with olive oil and process in a pressure canner so that it would keep for the rest of the year.

I enthusiastically ate everything that Dad put up, but I never once considered doing any of those things myself. What he did seemed an impossible feat, the work of a titan canner with resources I could not replicate. After all, Dad still lived in the country near a forest full of wild edibles and had a large vegetable garden; I lived in a rented apartment. Even after my epiphany about homemade gravlax, it was years before I actually tried the recipe or thought about putting up any other kinds of food myself.

But all that changed in 1994, when I was eight months pregnant with my second child, Mo. I'd gone into the nesting stage, which for some women means buying burp cloths or starting a college fund. For me, it meant an obsession to preserve. I got it into my head that I would be housebound for months and would otherwise starve.

When I told my father that I wanted to can, he became my co-conspirator, and we put up 20 pints of tomatoes from his garden that first year alone. Soon after my son was born, my fears of domestic incarceration passed, but the pleasure of having those tomatoes in the cupboard

RECIPE

Frisée aux Lardons

(Frisée Salad with Poached Eggs and Bacon)

SERVES 4

Slivers of bacon create a pleasing taste and textural contrast in this classic French bistro salad (left).

- **5 1/2"-thick slices home-cured bacon (see facing page), sliced crosswise into 1/2"-wide strips**
- **1 tbsp. white wine vinegar**
- **4 large eggs**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped shallots**
- **1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice**
- **2 tsp. dijon mustard**
- **2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1/2 lb. frisée greens, torn into medium-size pieces**

1. Combine bacon and 1 cup water in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until water evaporates and bacon crisps, 30–40 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a plate. Reserve fat in skillet.

2. Prepare eggs for poaching: Bring a 4-quart saucepan of water to a boil; add vinegar; reduce heat to medium-low. Crack each egg into its own ramekin and set aside. (Don't cook the eggs yet.)

3. In a medium bowl, whisk together shallots, lemon juice, mustard, and 3 tbsp. reserved bacon fat. While whisking, slowly drizzle in the olive oil to make a smooth vinaigrette. Season with salt and pepper. In a large bowl, toss frisée with vinaigrette. Divide frisée and bacon between 4 plates.

4. In the saucepan, swirl simmering water with a spoon to create a whirlpool effect. Slide 2 eggs into water; cook until just firm, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, top first 2 salads with 1 egg apiece; repeat with remaining eggs. Season salads with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Broiled clams topped with parmesan and foriana sauce.

stuck with me. Over the course of the next few years, Dad also taught me how to preserve in oil, how to pickle, and how to dry-cure. Now I cure bacon with a flavorful combination of salt, sugar, pepper, and dried herbs and preserve foriana sauce—a combination of nuts, raisins, garlic, and oregano—in oil. I smoke chicken breasts with a stove-top smoker, pickle all kinds of vegetables, put up brandied figs and other macerated fruits, and freeze wild mushrooms that I've gathered in the Rocky Mountains, where my husband and I have a second house.

My Everest, though, was the tuna. I had never even considered tackling a fish of my own until 2000, when my buddy Beaver Truax made a connection with a fisherman in Montauk, on the eastern tip of Long Island, who sold us a 45-pound freshly caught yellowfin. After numerous nervous conference calls with my father, Beaver and I butchered it and canned it. After allowing it to age for six months, we tasted it. It was amazingly mild, with a flaky texture and a beautiful, pale pink color. I've been canning tuna ever since, albeit in smaller amounts and from fish I buy at the market.

Over the years I've found that it is just as easy to use Dad's preservation techniques in the city as it is in the country. Urban centers like New York host excellent farmers' markets that bring a vast array of produce to market at their peak. By putting up those foods myself, I keep their flavors pristine and unadulterated, and I can preserve small batches of everything, favoring variety over quantity. I've also come to realize that canning actually saves me more time than it takes up because putting up foods that become the focal points of meals a few days or even a few months later means that I expend less energy when it

METHOD

Clams Foriana

(Italian Stuffed Clams)

Foriana sauce makes a great alternative for the bread crumb stuffing often used on baked or broiled clams (facing page). Arrange an oven rack 7" below broiler element and heat. Scrub 12 littleneck clams with a stiff brush under cold running water. Working with 1 clam at a time, hold it, lip side up, in a kitchen towel. Work the edge of a blunt-tipped clam knife into the lip of clam opposite the hinge. Slide the knife around the edge to sever the muscle at the hinge. Twist the knife to pop off the top shell. (Discard the top shell.) Slide the knife underneath the clam meat to sever it from bottom shell. Transfer shucked clams to baking sheet. Combine 2 tbsp. finely grated parmesan cheese with 1/4 cup of foriana sauce (see below) in a small bowl. Spoon about 1 tsp. of the mixture onto each clam. Cut 1 tbsp. unsalted butter into 12 small pieces and dot each clam with a piece of butter. Broil the clams until golden brown, 2–3 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the clams to a serving platter. Serves 2–4.

Foriana Sauce

Savory and sweet, this rustic Mediterranean nut-and-raisin sauce is a staple on the Italian island of Ischia, off the coast of Naples, where it is traditionally tossed with pasta during Lent. This version is based on one that author Eugenia Bone's father, the Italian cookbook writer and painter Edward Giobbi, often makes. She frequently serves it to vegetarians, "who almost always have an epiphany when they taste it on spaghetti". It's also a great topping for bruschetta or for clams (see recipe, above). The sauce is stored by means of an ancient preservation method of covering food with a layer of fat, much like that used for duck confit. The sauce is first heated, then packed into sterilized jars, which are covered with a layer of extra-virgin olive oil. The oil acts as a barrier between the sauce and the oxygen that most bacteria need to grow. **1** Bring a 6-quart saucepan of water to a boil. Place 3 half-pint canning jars along with their bands and lids (see page 107) in the boiling water. After about 30 seconds, remove the lids from the water with tongs and transfer to a kitchen towel on the counter. After about 10 minutes, use tongs to transfer the jars and bands to the kitchen towel and let air-dry. In a food processor, pulse 12 cloves garlic until finely chopped. Add 1 1/4 cups walnut halves and 1 1/4 cup pine nuts to the food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add 1 1/4 tbsp. dried oregano and pulse a few more times until just combined. **2** Heat 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in the walnut-pine nut mixture, 1/2 cup golden raisins, 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, and freshly ground black pepper, to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the nuts are lightly toasted, about 5 minutes. (The pine nuts will toast faster than the walnuts, so take care not to burn them.) Remove the skillet from the heat and let cool slightly. **3** When the jars are dry but still hot, distribute the nut-and-raisin mixture evenly between the jars, tightly packing each one, leaving about 1" of space below each rim. Pour about 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil into each jar so that it seeps to the bottom and covers sauce by 1/2". Wipe the rims of the jars with a hot damp towel. Cover and seal each jar with a lid and screw the bands on tightly. **4** The foriana sauce will keep in the refrigerator for up to 9 days. If using less than a full jar's worth of sauce in a preparation, top off the remaining sauce with a little more extra-virgin olive oil to cover by 1/2". Makes 3 half pints.

comes time for preparing dinner.

Each of the foods I preserve can be used in a number of finished dishes. The bacon becomes thick, juicy lardons that go into frisée salad or savory chicken canzanese, an Italian braised dish with bacon, garlic, sage, and rosemary. I toss the foriana sauce with pasta, use it as a topping for broiled clams, or stuff it into thick-cut pork chops, and I use my pickled cauliflower as a flavorful relish. The brandied figs become sweet, luxurious sauces for duck and chicken or are spooned on top of ice cream. And the tuna? It is used in robustly flavored pasta dishes, composed salads, and vitello tonnato (chilled veal with tuna sauce) and makes the best tuna fish sandwiches in the world.

The practice of putting up foods has other, less tangible rewards, too. Each jar in my pantry brings back the memory of the moment the food was preserved. Tasting my canned succotash reminds me of the September day not long ago when I ran into my former eighth-

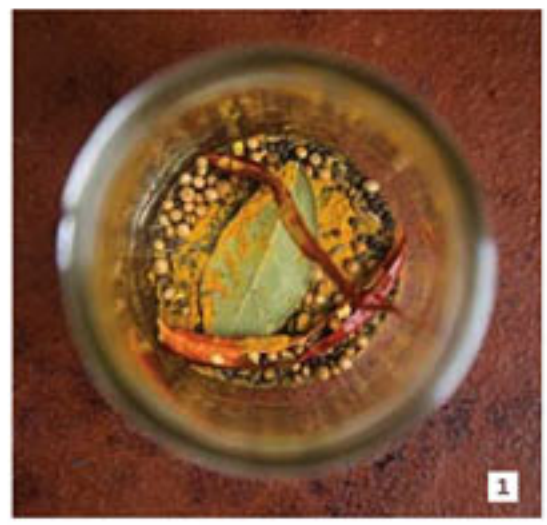
W *Methods for freezing apples and canning figs in brandy, plus recipes for apple strudel and duck with brandied figs, at* SAVEUR.COM/113

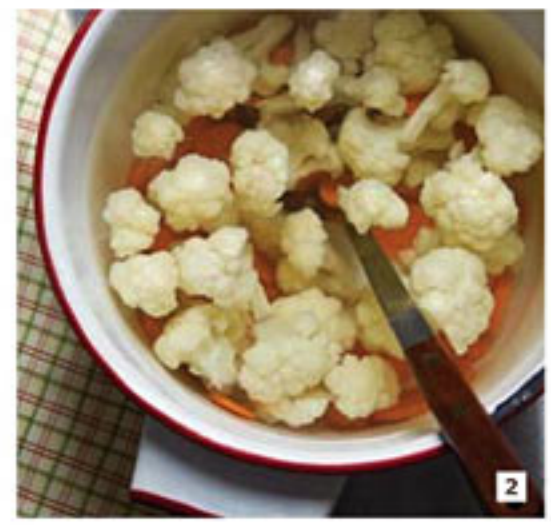
grade crush, while buying corn at the local farmers' market. In fact, just now I opened a jar of last spring's pickled asparagus, and the past was conjured up yet again. The vegetables reminded me of a day in May when my son, Mo, by then a gradeschooler, told me how much he loved it when the trees had blossoms and baby leaves on them at the same time. I'd almost forgotten that.

To learn more about the science of preserving food, visit the USDA's Complete Guide to Home Canning *at the National Center for Home Food Preservation's site, www.uga.edu/nchfp.*

URBAN HARVEST

Pickled Cauliflower





Inspired by Eugenia Bone's recipe for cauliflower pickle, we added turmeric, cumin, chiles, and black mustard seeds to give the resulting dish a South Asian accent. Steeping the vegetables in an acidic, vinegar-based solution prevents the growth of microorganisms, and boiling the vegetables in canning jars produces an airtight seal. **1** Bring a 6-quart saucepan of water to a boil. Place 6 one-pint canning jars along with their bands and lids (see page 107) in the boiling water. After about 30 seconds, remove the lids from the water with tongs and transfer to a kitchen towel on the counter. After about 10 minutes, use tongs to transfer the jars and bands to the kitchen towel and let air-dry. When the jars are dry, add 1/2 tsp. coriander seeds, 1/4 tsp. turmeric, 1/4 tsp. cumin seeds, 1/4 tsp. black mustard seeds, 1 bay leaf, and 1 dried, split chile de árbol to each jar. **2** Bring a 4-quart saucepan of salted water to a boil. Cut 2 lbs. washed cauliflower into 1" florets. Peel and slice 1 large carrot into 1/8"-thick coins. Halve and thinly slice 1 small red onion. Boil the cauliflower and carrots for 3 minutes; drain and transfer to a large bowl. Add the onion and stir to combine. Divide the vegetables between the jars, leaving about 3/4" of space at the top of each jar. **3** In a 4-quart saucepan, bring 4 cups water, 3 cups white wine vinegar (with at least 5 percent acidity), 6 tbsp. sugar, and 6 tbsp. kosher salt to a boil over high heat, whisking occasionally to dissolve it, about 5 minutes. Pour the vinegar solution into the jars, leaving 1/2" of space below each rim. Wipe the rims of the jars with a hot damp towel. Cover and seal each jar with a lid and screw the bands on tightly. Place the jars in a large pot fitted with a rack; pour in enough water to cover the jars by at least 3". Bring to a boil over high heat; boil for 15 minutes. When using this recipe at altitudes of 1,001 to 6,000 feet, add 20 more minutes of processing time; above 6,000 feet, add an additional 5 minutes. Turn off the heat; let sit for 5 minutes. **4** Using tongs or a rubber-handled jar lifter (see page 107), transfer the jars to a kitchen towel on the counter; let cool for 6 hours. Store cauliflower in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year. Refrigerate after opening. Makes 6 pints.

Grilled bratwurst with shoestring gremolata fries.

RECIPE

Grilled Bratwurst with Shoestring Gremolata Fries

SERVES 4

Pickled cauliflower, spiced with coriander, turmeric, mustard seeds, and bay leaf, is a great accompaniment to grilled bratwurst (pictured left). It also makes a fine partner for grilled pork chops.

- **Canola oil, for frying**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley**
- **3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **Zest of 1 lemon**
- **2 1/2 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **2 12-oz. bottles beer, preferably lager**
- **1 small yellow onion, quartered**
- **2 whole cloves**
- **4 bratwurst (about 3/4 lbs.; see page 107)**
- **4 New England–style hot dog buns (see page 107)**
- **2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted**
- **Dijon mustard, as needed**
- **1 pint pickled cauliflower (see facing page)**

1. Pour enough oil into a 12-quart pot so that it reaches a depth of 1". Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer inserted in the oil registers 375°. Make a gremolata by mixing parsley, garlic, and lemon zest in a large bowl; set aside. Over a kitchen towel, julienne potatoes lengthwise using the narrowest setting of a French mandoline (see page 107). Pat julienned potatoes dry with the towel.

2. Working in 2 batches, fry potatoes in oil until crisp, 6–10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fries to a paper towel–lined bowl. Season with salt. (Bring oil to 375° before frying second batch.) Transfer fries to bowl of gremolata; toss to coat fries evenly. (Serve hot or at room temperature.)

3. Build a medium-hot charcoal fire in a grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. Meanwhile, bring beer, onions, cloves, and 1 cup water to a boil in a 2-quart saucepan. Boil bratwurst in beer until almost cooked through, about 5 minutes. Drain.

4. Grill bratwurst, turning once, until browned, about 6 minutes. Using tongs, transfer bratwurst to a plate. Brush buns with the butter and grill until toasted and golden brown. Serve the bratwurst in the buns, slathered with mustard and garnished with the pickled cauliflower, alongside the fries.

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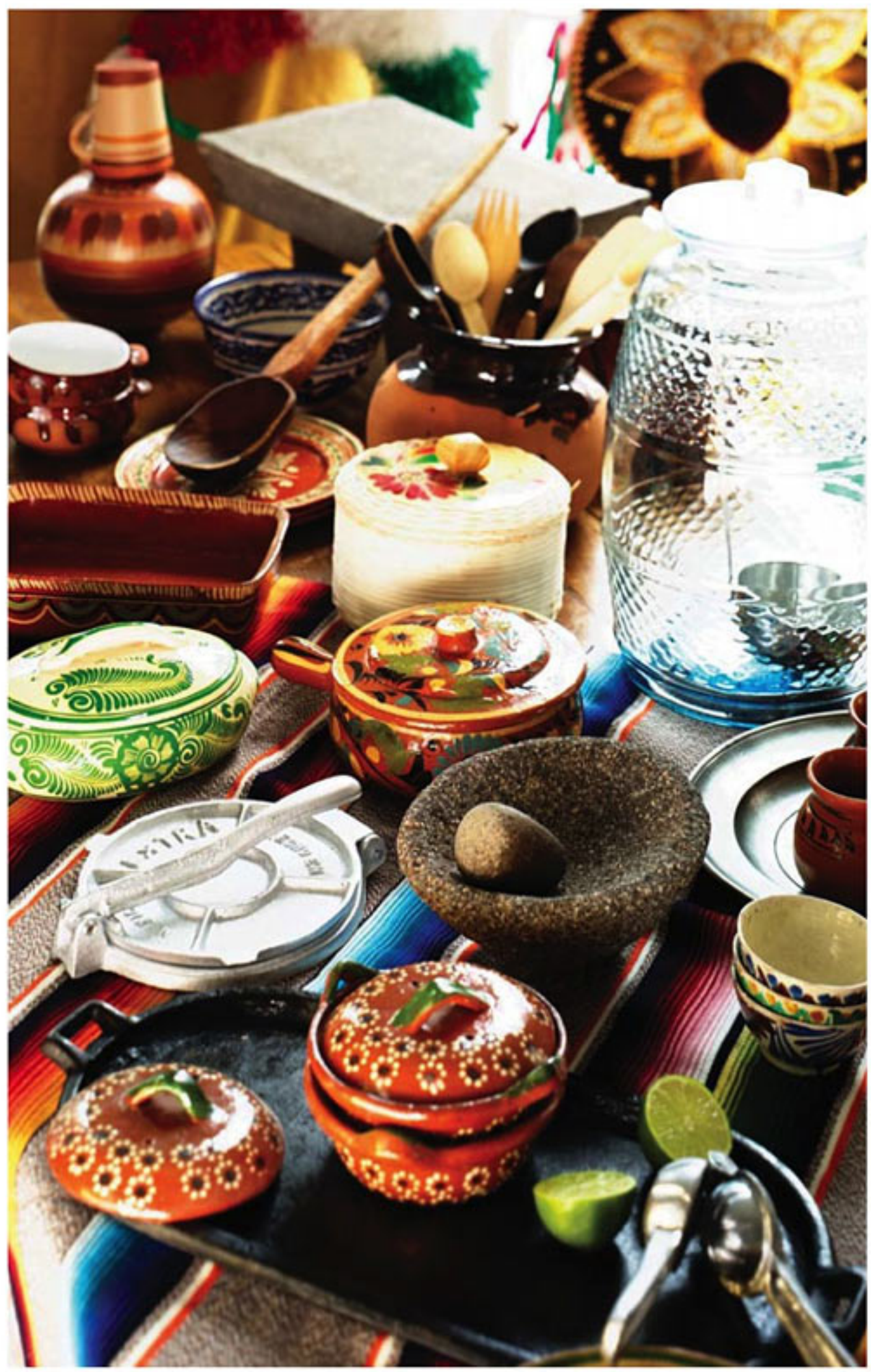

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ONCE UPON A TIME The mole recipe is said to have been refined in the convents of Puebla, Mexico, where nuns combined chiles and various other spices to create a unique, sweet and spicy sauce. The most curious tale is of Friar Pascual, a nervous chef who, while preparing a dinner for the town's archbishop and the visiting Spanish viceroy, accidentally dropped chiles, chocolate, and other spices into an almost ready turkey soup. The dishes were served, and Friar Pascual's prayers were answered when he received news from the dining room that the accidental dish was a complete success. This success and culinary complexity has been captured today in the ready-to-use Goya® Mole Sauce, which, when served with Goya® Mexican Rice, creates an authentic-tasting Mexican dish.

Ingredients

- **1** jar (9 oz.) Goya Mole
- **3** cups water or low-sodium chicken broth
- **1** chicken (3 1/2 lb.), cut into serving pieces
- **1** tsp. Goya Adobo with Pepper, or to taste
- **2** tbsp. Goya Corn Oil
- **1** package (8 oz.) Goya Mexican Rice mix, prepared according to package directions
- **1** can (16 oz.) Goya Refried Pinto Beans, prepared according to package directions
- **1** package (10 oz.) Goya Corn Tortillas, warmed

Directions

1. In a saucepan on low heat, combine Goya Mole and water or broth. Stir constantly until completely combined and sauce comes to a simmer. Remove from heat and keep warm.

2. Season chicken with Adobo. In a large skillet on medium heat, heat oil. Brown chicken on both sides. Pour off any fat. Add mole and stir so that chicken is completely covered by sauce. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer, partially covered, until chicken is cooked through, about 25 minutes. Stir occasionally, adding more water or broth if sauce gets too thick.

3. Serve in a deep platter with prepared Mexican Rice, Refried Beans, and warm Tortillas on the side.

Serves 4

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IN THE SAVEUR

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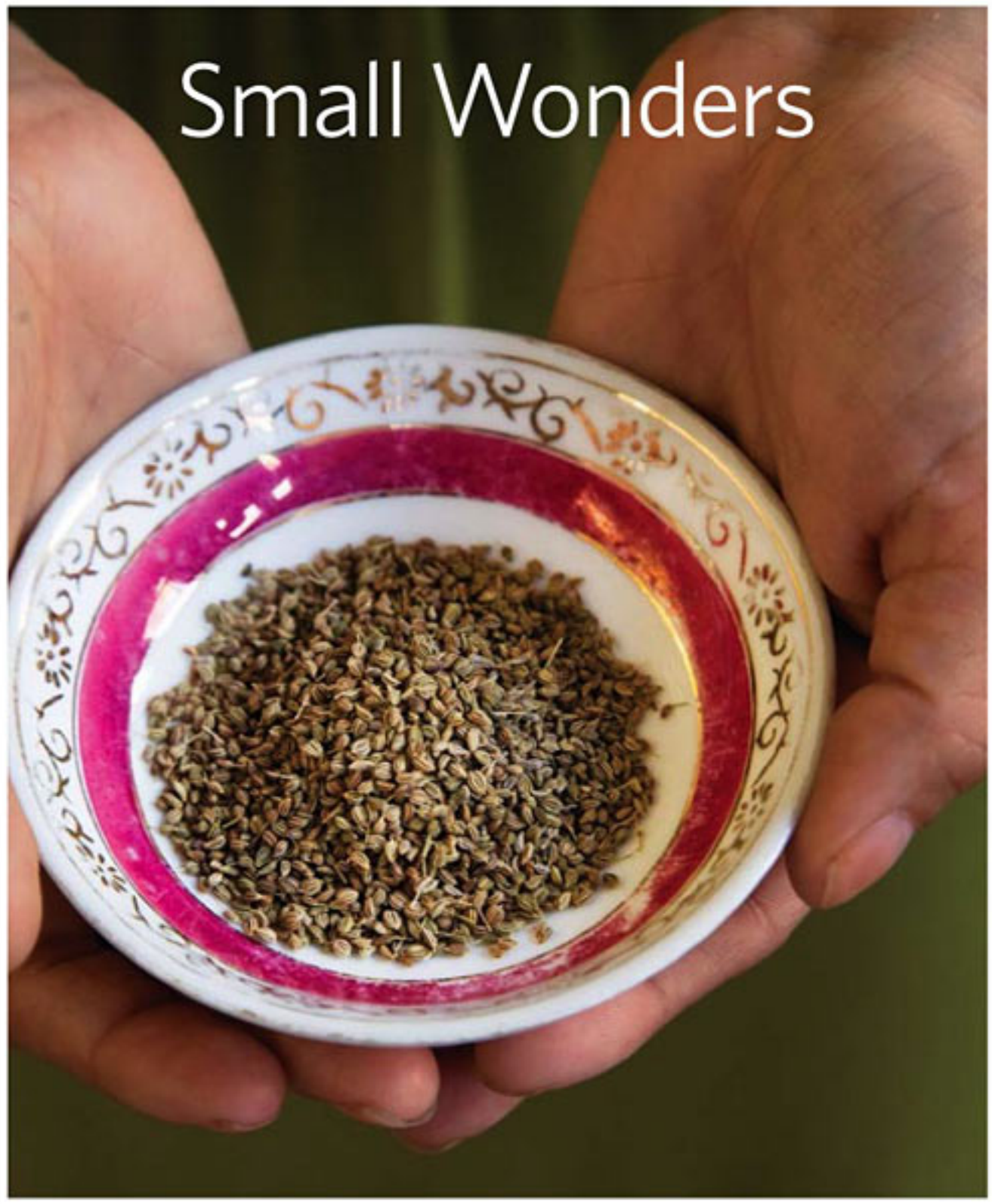
Dutch Treat

WHEN SAVEUR KITCHEN staffer Krystal Stone brought us her recipe for the espresso brownies featured in "Brownie Points" (page 46), we noticed that it called for cocoa powder instead of a bar of baking chocolate. We knew that the use of cocoa was likely to produce a more concentrated chocolate flavor, but, after making a few batches of Krystal's brownies using different kinds, we noticed that all cocoas are not created equal. Most are labeled either "natural" or "dutch process". What's the difference? Unlike natural cocoa (above left), the dutch-process variety (above right) is made from cacao beans that have been treated with an alkaline substance, usually potassium carbonate, which reduces their natural acidity. The method, called dutching, was introduced in 1828 by a Dutch chemist named Coenraad Johannes van Houten. By reducing cacao's acidity, dutching eliminates the sharpness that can overwhelm other aspects of the cocoa's flavor. It also promotes a type of chemical bonding that forms dark pigments, which, in turn, yield a deeper-colored powder. Sure enough, the brownies made with dutch-process cocoa were darker and had not only a richer, smoother chocolate taste but also a denser texture; that's because a batter with a lower acidity doesn't set the egg and flour proteins as firmly as one made with natural cocoa. So, if dark and fudgy is the way you like your brownies, go dutch.
—*Dave Lieberman*

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

KITCHEN

Small Wonders



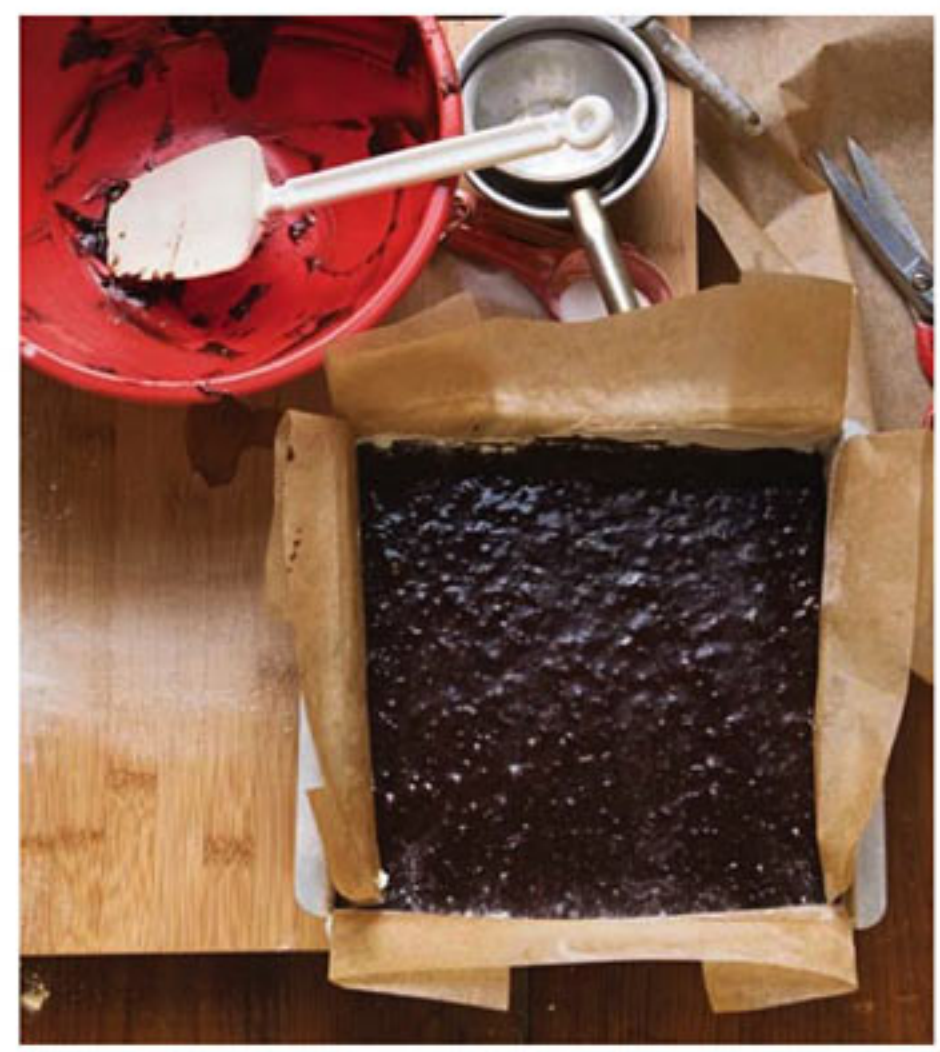
AJWAIN, ONE of the principal flavorings in the watermelon curry on page 84, is an Indian spice unfamiliar even to many aficionados of South Asian cooking. The brown seeds, which resemble tiny, striated footballs and are sometimes confused with cumin and celery seeds, aren't widely used in Indian restaurants in the States, though they are commonly sold in South Asian markets. Also known as bishop's weed or carom, this member of the carrot family has a slightly bitter, peppery-hot taste accompanied by an undertone of thyme. (In fact, ajwain contains thymol, the essential oil in thyme.) Ajwain seeds are actually the fruit of an indigenous Indian shrub; it grows wild in the west and the south of that country. With its bright flavor, ajwain is essential to the cuisines of the Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, where it enhances curries and the dough of fried snacks. If you can't find it, try mixing 1 tsp. dried thyme leaves with 1 tsp. celery seed and ¼ tsp. coarsely ground black pepper, and you'll have a near-identical substitute. —*Raghavan Iyer*

Fine Press

The potatoes shown on page 66 have a texture so smooth that "mashed" is something of a misnomer. The key to achieving such a satiny character? A ricer. This simply designed kitchen tool functions like a garlic press, extruding cooked foods through small perforations. A ricer processes the potatoes more gently than a masher, mixer, or food mill does, releasing less starch and keeping the potatoes from becoming gluey or sticky. —*Beth Kracklauer*

Ready for Liftoff

BROWNIES ARE EASY to make and even easier to eat, but they are notoriously difficult to remove from the pan. While testing the recipes for "Brownie Points" (page 46), we baked dozens of batches and, along the way, experimented with a few techniques for keeping our brownies from sticking, including greasing the pan with butter, dusting it with flour, and lining its bottom with a sheet of greased parchment paper. Those techniques left us scraping sweets still stubbornly lodged in the pan or, worse, inverting them en masse onto a cutting board, which destroyed their delicate, flaky crust. There had to be a better way, we reasoned. Finally, we turned to the 2006 edition of *Joy of Cooking* (Scribner), which recommended lining the pan with a sheet of greased tinfoil long enough that its edges would hang over the side of the pan and serve as handles. We decided to use greased parchment paper instead of foil and also added a second sheet, laid into the pan crosswise, to form a second set of handles. When the brownies were done, the entire cake lifted easily out of the pan, completely intact and ready for dividing into squares. —*Hunter Lewis*



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (4)

Well Preserved

When my grandfather retired from his job as the manager of a Gerber baby food plant in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1983, he received a parting gift of 48 glass canning jars from the Ball Corporation, which had long supplied Gerber with its baby food jars. Etched into each jar, beneath the cursive Ball logo, were the dates of my grandfather's 37 years of employment. On the back was an inscription to my grandparents: "John & Pat Good Luck!" The jars have remained in my family for 25 years, and they've seen plenty of use. Working on the canning recipes for "Urban Harvest" (page 88) got me thinking about the history of these iconic kitchen vessels, often called mason jars (after John L. Mason, who patented the screw-top, sealable jars, in 1858). The Ball jar was first mass-produced by the Ball Brothers Glass Manufacturing Co. of Buffalo, New York, in 1884; by 1910, the company was turning out tens of millions of jars a year. Ball sold its glassmaking division in 1993. Over the decades, the jars' design and composition have varied, from the original blue and amber glass varieties to the current thermal-shock-resistant kind made from flint glass. Such subtle changes in appearance are avidly tracked by people like Bruce W. Schank, the 54-year-old creator of www.balljars.net, a website for Ball jar collectors. "The Ball jar is the same thing as mom and apple pie," says Schank. Well, sort of: a jar dating to the 1880s is expected to fetch as much as $25,000 at a private auction this summer. —*H.L.*

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered food products and destinations too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY HUNTER LEWIS

Fare

To make the egg miso sauce, purchase **shiro miso**, or white miso ($8.63 for a 12.1-ounce package), from Eden Organic (888/424-3336; www.edenfoods.com). Eden Organic also carries **mugi miso** ($7.43 for a 12.1-ounce package). Get your fill at the 2008 **Bean Hole Supper**, on August 9, at the Patten Lumbermen's Museum (16 Shinpond Road, Patten, Maine; 207-528-2650; www.lumbermensmuseum.org). To experience the best tomatoes grown in the Garden State, visit **The Farm** (3 Gully Road, Freehold; 732/462-2134) and **Clayton Farm** (125 Monmouth Road, Freehold; 732/780-2478; www.claytonfamilyfarm.com). Sample the state's eclectic array of cuisines and culinary specialties at **White Manna** (358 River Street, Hackensack; 201/342-0914); **White Mana** (*sic*) (470 Tonnele Avenue, Jersey City; 201/963-1441); **Bay Avenue Trattoria** (122 Bay Avenue, Highlands; 732/872-9800; www.bayavetrattoria.com); **A Toute Heure** (232 Centennial Avenue, Cranford; 908/276-6600; www.atouteheure.com); **Urban Tadka** (42 Marconi Avenue, Iselin; 732/283-1043; www.urbantadkausa.com); **De Lorenzo's** (530 Hudson Street, Trenton; 609/695-9534; www.delorenzostomatopies.com); **Mustache Bill's** (Broadway and Eighth Street, Barnegat Light; 609/494-0155); **White House Sub Shop** (2301 Arctic Avenue, Atlantic City; 609/345-1564); **Cucharamama** (233 Clinton Street, Hoboken; 201/420-1700; www.cucharamama.com) and **Zafra** (301 Willow Avenue, Hoboken; 201/610-9801; www.zafrakitchens.com); **Fralinger's** (1325 Boardwalk, Atlantic City; 609/344-0758; www.fralingers.com), which also sells its specialties by mail order; **Doo Rae Myun Ok** (166 Main Street, Fort Lee; 201/346-1331); and the **Shad Fest** (609/397-0055; www.lambertville.org), for Delaware River shad. Both **Valley Shepherd Creamery** (50 Fairmount Road, Long Valley; 908/876-3200; www.valleyshepherd.com) and **D'Artagnan**, with its large selection of game birds, rabbit, duck, and other imported delicacies (280 Wilson Avenue, Newark; 800/327-8246; www.dartagnan.com), sell their products online. To quench your summer thirst, order **Manhattan Special Espresso Coffee Soda** directly from the company ($16.95 for twelve 10-ounce bottles; 718/388-4144; www.manhattanspecial.com).

Kitchenwise

New York–based designer **Clodagh** designed the SAVEUR test kitchen with the help of her talented design staff (212/780-5300; www.clodagh.com). The **Whalen Berez Group** installed our cabinets (732/946-1078; www.thewbg.com), and **Delform Studios** created the recessed sideboard and poured the concrete window bench (201/438-3915; www.delformstudios.com). **Sub-Zero** provided us with the side-by-side refrigerators/freezers (model numbers 632 and 700BR) and the column freezer (model T18IF70NSP). **Wolf** provided our double oven (model DO30L), the single oven (model SO30L), the microwave (model MW24), the warming drawer (model WWD 30), the five-burner electric cooktops (model CT36E), and the cast-iron grill module (model IG15-S). A custom-made rolling cart fitted with an electric cooktop (model CEP365ZB) and oven (model P301) were provided by **Thermador** (800/656-9226; www.thermador.com). **Kohler** provided our sinks (800/456-4537; www.kohler.com); the dishwashers (model DWHD94EP) also came from Thermador. Sub-Zero provided the two wine storage units (model 424; 800/222-7820; www.subzero.com).

Cellar

To make the bamboo cocktail, use **orange bitters** ($3.99 for a 4-ounce bottle) available from Wally's (888/992-5597; www.wallywine.com). For the **sherries** listed in our tasting notes, contact San Francisco Wine Exchange for the **González Byass Noé Muy Viejo VORS** and **González Byass Tio Pepe Fino** (631/218-9330); Classical Wines (206/297-6713) for the **Hidalgo La Gitana Manzanilla**; Michael Skurnik Wines (516/677-9300) for the **Lustau Solera Reserva Dry Oloroso "Don Nuño"** and the **Lustau Solero Reserva Palo Cortado Península**; Pernod Ricard USA (914/848-4041) for the **Sandeman Character Medium Dry Amontillado**; and Kindred Spirits (305/919-9911) for the **Williams & Humbert Dry Sack 15 Year Sweet Old Oloroso**.

Classic

To give Krystal's espresso brownies the right texture, color, and depth of flavor, use **chocolate-covered espresso beans**, available at Charles Chocolates ($8 for a 4-ounce bag; 888/652-4412; www.charleschocolates.com), and **unsweetened, dutch-process cocoa powder** ($2.95 for a 4-ounce bag) from Penzeys Spices (800/741-7787; www.penzeys.com).

English Afternoon

Bed Bath & Beyond (800/462-3966; www.bedbathandbeyond.com) carries the Oxo Good Grips potato **ricer** ($19.99) for making creamy mashed potatoes and an **ice cream maker** ($79.99; model ICE-30BC) for making raspberry sorbet studded with crushed fresh fruit.

Ricotta

To purchase the array of hard, soft, and creamy ricottas found in our ricotta glossary, contact Di Palo Fine Foods (212/226-1033) for the **ricotta infornata**, **ricotta affumicata**, and **ricotta salata al peperoncino** (all $7.99 for a 1-pound package). Buon Italia (212/633-9090; www.buonitalia.com) sells **ricotta di pecora** ($10.65 for a

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1-pound tub; ask for "fresh sheep ricotta"). Di Palo also carries **ricotta impastata** ($22 for a 10-pound tub), **ricotta forte** ($8.99 for a 1-pound tub), and **ricotta salata** ($7.99 for a 1-pound package). You'll also find **ricotta di bufala** ($8.75 for a 1-pound tub; ask for "fresh buffalo ricotta") at Buon Italia. To make your own fresh ricotta, use liquid animal **rennet** ($6.50 for a 2-ounce bottle) and **disposable ricotta molds** ($9.95 for 12) from the New England Cheesemaking Supply Company (413/628-3808; www.cheesemaking.com).

Watermelon

To make the Russian pickled watermelon, order **pickling spices** ($1.50 for a 1-ounce package) from World Spice Merchants (206/682-7274; www.worldspice.com). To make the watermelon curry, order **ajwain** ($1.25 for a 1-ounce package) and **nigella seeds** ($1.25 for a 1-ounce package), and garnish the Sicilian watermelon pudding with **candied citron** ($8.99 for a 1-pound package) from VineTree Orchards (800/936-5128; www.vinetreeorchards.com). Melissa's/World Variety Produce can help source **watermelons** (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com). Seed Savers Exchange (563/382-5990; www.seedsavers.org) sells heirloom watermelon seeds.

Urban Harvest

To can your own tuna, use a **pressure canner**. We prefer the All American 10½-quart pressure canner/cooker ($215.95 for model A910), available directly at Cooking and Canning Company (800/851-3266; www.allamericanpressurecookers.com). **Canning jars** ($8.49 for 12 half-pint-size jars; ask for "Ball Mason canning jars") and a **jar lifter** ($4.99) can be found at the Canning Pantry (800/285-9044; www.canningpantry.com). To julienne potatoes, use a stainless-steel **French mandoline** ($69.99) from Oxo (800/545-4411; www.oxo.com; ask for a "mandoline"). Order fresh **bratwurst** ($6.99 per pound) from Schaller & Weber (800/847-4115; www.schallerweber.com) and **New England-style hot dog buns** ($19.95 for 24 rolls) from Maple and More (603/878-2525; www.mapleandmore.com).

Items marked with Ⓟ also appear, with photographs, in our Visual Pantry at www.saveur.com/visualpantry113.

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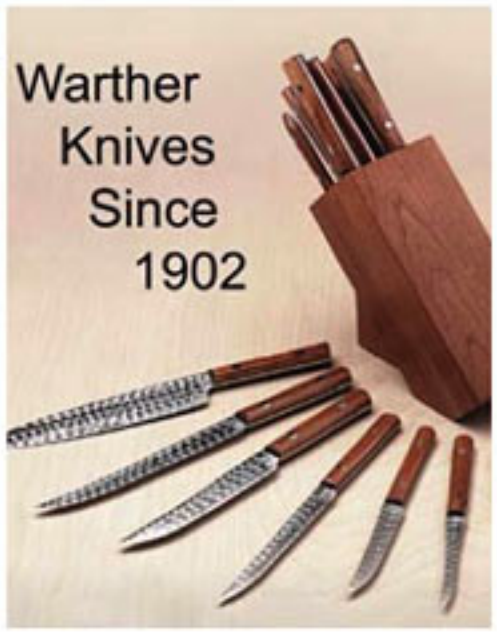

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